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**JESUS AND GOD IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK:
UNITY AND DISTINCTION**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between Jesus and God in the Gospel of Mark. Against the predominant view since the early 1970's, it argues that the Markan Jesus is considerably more than a merely human Messiah; he is a divine figure. But he is not placed in a general, Hellenistic category of superhuman or divine beings, nor ascribed only a general transcendent status. Instead, Mark links Jesus directly and closely to YHWH, the one God of Israel. In contrast to many earlier studies of the christology of Mark, which focus on christological titles, this study is primarily concerned with Mark's narrative and the author's portrayal of Jesus. Assuming that Mark's audience were familiar to varying degrees with different traditions of the Hellenistic world, the text is interpreted in its wider Old Testament/Jewish, Greco-Roman, and early Christian context, all the while remaining sensitive to intra-textual links. It appears that the Markan Jesus assumes divine attributes and acts in exclusively divine roles, that he fulfils Old Testament promises about God's own intervention and coming, and that his relationship to people is analogous to God's relationship to Israel. It is of particular significance that Jesus in several cases takes on roles which were used to demonstrate someone's deity or, YHWH's sovereignty above all other gods. The result is a surprising overlap between Mark's portrait of Jesus and the presentation of Israel's God in the biblical and early Jewish traditions and, in some cases, the divine beings of the Greco-Roman world. While early Jewish literature occasionally can ascribe divine roles to a few exalted figures, the Markan description of Jesus is unique in two respects: the majority of the divine prerogatives ascribed to Jesus are without parallel in any of the aforementioned texts, and the number of these is unrivalled. Such a portrait of Jesus may call into question both the true humanity of Jesus (Jesus is not fully human) and the monotheistic faith of Israel (Jesus is a second divine being alongside God), but it is clear that Mark maintains both. The christology of Mark represents a paradox in which Jesus is fully human and, at the same time, in a mysterious way placed on the divine side of the God-creation divide.

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations and the format for citing sources in this study follow P. H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999) with the following additions and exceptions:

<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CIA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism

Commentaries on Mark which are listed separately in the bibliography are only referred to by author and title (*Mark*; *Markus*; *Marc*).

Also only referred to by author and short title (except in cases where these appear in the first chapter) are the following works:

Bauckham, R. J. *Jesus and the God of Israel: 'God Crucified' and other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008 (*Jesus*).

Blackburn, B. L. *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Anēr Concept as an Interpretative Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2:40. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1991 (*Theios Anēr*).

Davies, W. D. and D. C. Allison. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988-1997 (*Matthew*).

Gathercole, S. J. *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006 (*Preexistent Son*).

Marcus, J. *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993 (*Way*).

Schenke, L. *Die Wundererzählungen des Markusevangeliums*. Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 3. Stuttgart: Katolisches Bibelwerk, 1974 (*Wundererzählungen*).

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1. Introduction

In his famous and influential study of the christology of the New Testament, Cullmann remarked that, “early Christianity does not hesitate to transfer to Jesus everything the Old Testament says about God.”¹ During his investigation of the *Kyrios* title, he observed that the divine name, YHWH, was transferred to Jesus and, as a consequence, that distinctive functions and attributes reserved for God in the Old Testament [hereafter: OT]² were ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament [hereafter: NT].³ In Cullmann’s view, however, the significance of this fact had been overlooked by previous scholarship. “It is surprising that scholars do not give more consideration to such an important fact,” he wrote.

Cullmann’s own study did not initiate an exploration of this phenomenon, however. His own concentration on titles set subsequent scholarship on other paths and led instead to an intensified study of christological titles. Therefore, about 30 years later, when discussing the study of the use of the OT in the NT, a similar complaint could be raised by Kreitzer:

Yet, one specialized feature of the Christian’s use of Old Testament texts has not been as thoroughly explored as perhaps it ought to be. This involves the way in which an outright substitution of christocentrism for the theocentrism occurs with many of the Old Testament quotations and allusions.⁴

Kreitzer himself focused on how the OT concept of the day of YHWH was transferred to Jesus in Paul’s letters and its implications. Other studies have followed, particularly on Paul,⁵ but also on other New Testament authors⁶, concepts, or themes.⁷ Yet, much remains to be done.

¹ O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963; 1st Germ. ed. 1957), 307.

² I am aware of the complex issues which surround the use of the expression “Old Testament,” but since no other terminology is without problems I will use this as shorthand for the collection of writings which today are included in the Hebrew Bible.

³ Cullmann, *Christology*, 234-37.

⁴ L. J. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul’s Eschatology* (JSNTSup 19; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 18.

⁵ E.g., D. B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul’s Christology* (WUNT 2:47; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992); N. Richardson, *Paul’s Language about God* (JSNTSup 99; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), esp. 240-307.

⁶ E.g., on Acts, H. D. Buckwalter, “The Divine Savior,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 112-20; on Revelation, R.

The christology of Mark has been studied intensively over a long period, but there has been surprisingly little focus on how Mark's portrait of Jesus overlaps with the presentation of God in the OT and, as a consequence, the christological implications of this phenomenon. This thesis seeks to remedy this deficiency. One result is that the common opinion that the Gospel of Mark espouses a "low" christology and presents Jesus as a merely human being⁸ needs to be reassessed. For Mark, Jesus is considerably more than so. Before further defining the contribution and approach of this thesis we need, however, to delineate the background against which it is set.

1.1. Previous Research on Mark's Christology

In spite of intensive study and numerous publications on the christology of Mark over the past 150 years or so, not many have focused *directly* on the central question of this thesis, namely how the Gospel of Mark relates its main character Jesus to YHWH, the one God of Israel. Of course, various opinions have been voiced on this question, but other issues have been in the centre of the debate. I begin by highlighting these other issues, before surveying previous views on the identity of the Markan Jesus.

1.1.1. The Predominant Issues

The publication of Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis* in 1901 marked a watershed in the study of Mark's Gospel and since then, whether supported or opposed, it has profoundly influenced the way the Gospel of Mark has been read.⁹ According to Wrede, Mark, following an early Christian tradition, describes Jesus as keeping his messiahship secret. This theme pervades the whole of Mark and is, according to

Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); C. A. Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. D. B. Capes et al.; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007): 227-43.

⁷ C. J. Davis, *The Name and the Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 129; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); A. Ruck-Schröder, *Der Name Gottes und der Name Jesu: Eine neutestamentliche Studie* (WMANT 80; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999); C. H. Williams, *I am He: The Interpretation of 'Ani Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 2:113; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000).

⁸ Cf. e.g., B. D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58.

⁹ W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971; 1st Germ. ed. 1901). The original German title was *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.

Wrede, found in the commands to be silent given to demons, healed persons, and the disciples; Jesus' teaching of the people in parables; and the misunderstandings of the disciples regarding Jesus' true identity. After an initial, negative assessment of Wrede's thesis,¹⁰ it was soon generally accepted that Mark had organized his Gospel around the theme of "the messianic secret." Numerous monographs and articles have appeared since then, and "the secret" has been worked through over and over again resulting in a variety of corrections of Wrede's initial work.¹¹ And although it has been argued recently that the Messianic secret belongs to the past,¹² it continues to play a significant role.¹³

Another predominant factor in the discussion of the Markan christology is the so-called *theios anēr* or *divine man* concept.¹⁴ Already F. C. Baur pointed out similarities between Jesus and the famous Hellenistic miracle worker Apollonius of Tyana, but it was Reitzenstein who laid the foundation for the *theios anēr* concept in his 1910 work on the Hellenistic mystery religions.¹⁵ Dibelius and Bultmann soon took up the concept and utilized it to explain the origin of the miracle traditions and the background of the Son of God title.¹⁶ Until the late 1950's the concept was used

¹⁰ A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarius zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1906).

¹¹ For a survey, see J. L. Blevins, *The Messianic Secret in Markan Research, 1901-1976* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981); J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 1-23; H. Räisänen, *The 'Messianic Secret' in Mark* (trans. C. M. Tuckett; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 38-75. See also the collection of essays in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Messianic Secret* (London: SPCK, 1983). The most comprehensive treatments of the topic after Wrede are H. J. Ebeling, *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten*, (BZNW 19; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939); E. Sjöberg, *Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955); T. A. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963); G. Minnette de Tillesse, *Le secret messianique dans L'Évangile de Marc* (LD 47; Paris: Cerf, 1968); Kingsbury, *Christology*; and Räisänen, *Messianic Secret*.

¹² D. J. Harrington, *What are they saying about Mark?* (Mahwah, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 2004), 31.

¹³ See e.g., W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ The best survey is J. R. Brady, *Jesus Christ: Divine Man or Son of God?* (Lanham, Md.: University of America Press, 1992), 7-38; 99-120. See also Kingsbury, *Christology*, 25-45 and the brief, but informative overview in B. L. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Anēr Concept as an Interpretative Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark* (WUNT 2:40; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991), 1-10.

¹⁵ R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysteriereligionen: Nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1910). The most thorough study of the concept is L. Bieler, *THEIOS ANER: Das Bild des 'göttlichen Menschen' in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (2 vols.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1935-36).

¹⁶ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. B. L. Woolf; London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935; 1st Germ. ed., 1919), 70-97; R. Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition* (trans. J. Marsh; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963; 1st Germ. ed., 1921), 218-41; idem *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. K. Grobel; London: SCM, 1952; 1st Germ. ed., 1948), 1:130-32. The significant influence

in a positive sense in order to claim that Mark's understanding of Jesus was essentially the same as that of Paul. But a change took place, and scholars begun to view the concept as negative instead. Some scholars argued that Mark advocated a Hellenistic divine man christology, a "theology of glory" that was inferior to the theology of Paul or John.¹⁷ The more common position, however, has been to view Mark positively, as the Evangelist who took over a divine man christology in order to correct it.¹⁸ Although critical reactions to the divine man concept were not lacking,¹⁹ it was not until the 1970's that serious criticism was raised against the existence of a fixed *theios anēr* concept in Antiquity.²⁰ Scholars also began to question its usefulness in the study of Mark's christology.²¹ Nevertheless, many scholars continue to defend the existence of the *phenomenon* of divine men in the Hellenistic world and its value for understanding Mark.²² There also seems to be a return to the positive use of the concept that was prevailing during the first part of the 20th century. For example, Räisänen and Telford both argue that Mark utilized the concept to defend a high Hellenistic christology against a low Jewish Christian one. At the same time, other scholars continue to question the concept and offer alternative interpretations, arguing that all Markan miracles can be accounted for in

of the divine man concept on NT scholarship can be seen in H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 1:173, 264, 276, 290, 2:127-28, 174, 184, 314.

¹⁷ D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* (WMANT 11; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); S. Schulz, *Die Stunde der Botschaft* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1970).

¹⁸ J. Schreiber, "Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums," *ZTK* 58 (1961): 154-83; L. E. Keck, "Mark 3:7-12 and Mark's Christology," *JBL* 84 (1965): 341-58; T. J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); N. Perrin, "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology," *JR* 51 (1971): 173-87; P. J. Achtemeier, "The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," *JBL* 91 (1972): 198-221; L. Schenke, *Die Wundererzählungen des Markusevangeliums* (SBS 3; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974); D.-A. Koch, *Die Bedeutung der Wundererzählungen für die Christologie des Markusevangeliums* (BZNW 42; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975).

¹⁹ Particularly in Great Britain. See e.g., A. Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941).

²⁰ W. von Martitz, "ἁγιός," *TDNT* 8: 334-40; D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBLDS 1; Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1972); C. H. Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (SBLDS 40; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977).

²¹ O. Betz, "The Concept of the So-called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology," in *Studies in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (ed. D. Aune; NovTSup 33; Leiden: Brill, 1972): 229-40; O. Betz and W. Grimm, *Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu* (ANTJ 2; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977); J. D. Kingsbury, "The Divine Man as the Key to Mark's Christology – The End of an Era?," *Int* 35 (1981): 243-57.

²² Räisänen, *Messianic Secret*, 64-65; M. Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie* (2 vols.; WUNT 2:80; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995), 2:188-89; Telford, *Theology*, 31.

the Jewish tradition and that a Jewish-Palestinian-Christian *Sitz in Leben* can be posited for the genres and motifs.²³

A third major factor in the interpretation of Mark is the study of titles. Lagrange stated already in his 1911 commentary on the Gospel of Mark that the author presents his belief in Jesus by means of the titles he uses.²⁴ A similar view was opined by Taylor who in 1953 wrote, “the question, who Jesus is, is approached best by considering how men named Him, for it is by His names that He is revealed and known.”²⁵ Yet, it was probably Cullmann’s concentration on titles in his *Christology of the New Testament* that more than anything else initiated the study of titles which has preoccupied subsequent New Testament scholarship.²⁶

In Markan scholarship, one can identify two phases of the study of titles. In the first, titles were interpreted in the light of Jewish and Greco-Roman usages of these, that is, an imported background served as the determining factor for the interpretation. In a second phase, partly coincident with the use of narrative methodologies, the focus has shifted and the meaning of the titles is determined by the context, by Mark’s narrative and his own use of them.²⁷

The dominance of the study of titles in Markan scholarship in recent years can be seen in Naluparayil’s survey from 2000, which gives a detailed overview of various title approaches.²⁸ Many studies have been concerned with identifying the dominating title in Mark. Others have focused on how various titles relate to each other. Some scholars, particularly those who advocate a *corrective christology*, claim

²³ Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*; E. Koskeniemi, “Apollonius of Tyana: A Typical Theios Anēr?” *JBL* 117 (1998): 455-67.

²⁴ Lagrange, *Marc*, cxxxiv.

²⁵ V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1953), 1.

²⁶ See L. W. Hurtado, “Christ-Devotion in the First Two Centuries: Reflections and a Proposal,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 12 (1996): 17-33, 20. Studies that followed soon after Cullmann’s include: H. E. Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der synoptischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1959); F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (FRLANT 83; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963); W. Kramer, *Christos, Kyrios, Gottessohn* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1963); R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965).

²⁷ Hahn’s *Christologische Hoheitstitel* is a good illustration of the first phase, whereas E. K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) exemplifies the second phase. In Broadhead’s study of names and titles applied to Jesus a short *background* study (usually limited to the OT) is provided before the meaning is determined by means of a study of the *foreground* of Mark’s narrative.

²⁸ J. C. Naluparayil, “Jesus of the Gospel of Mark: Present State of Research,” *CurBS* 8 (2000): 191-226.

that Mark uses the titles so that one title corrects another. Others propose a “polar christology” in which dominating titles do not correct each other but stand in reciprocal relationships. Yet, others have concluded Mark’s use of titles is both complex and full of nuances and that attempts to identify one dominating title does not do justice to Mark’s narrative.

Following these brief comments about the dominating issues in the scholarly discussion of Mark’s christology, we now turn to the question how earlier scholarship has interpreted the person of Jesus.

1.1.2. The Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

The common view of the Synoptic Gospels, particularly Mark and Luke, is that they display “low” christologies. The question is, however, what the markers “low” and “high” actually signify. For the purpose of being able to outline past views on Mark’s christology in this regard, I here suggest the following broad definitions: “Low” indicates that Jesus is a mere human being, even if a highly exalted prophet or messianic figure. “High” indicates that Jesus is more than human, supernatural in a broad sense, whether a divine man, a heavenly being, or in some way identified with the God of Israel.²⁹ When defined in this way, it will be clear that there is far from a consensus that Mark’s christology is “low.” This appears to be the majority view, but a growing number of scholars contend that Mark’s christology amounts to considerably more than that. In fact, the present scholarly opinion is varied, probably more divided than ever before. This has, however, not always been the case.

As I have shown elsewhere, three broad periods can be detected in the scholarly estimation of Mark’s christology: 1) late 19th century; 2) 1900 – ca 1970; 3) ca 1970 – present time.³⁰ The first period is characterized by a combination of a low christology with a high estimation of Mark as history. Holzmann argued that the Gospel of Mark was the most primitive gospel and therefore the most reliable source of Jesus’ life.³¹ At the same time he and others maintained that Mark’s Jesus was the

²⁹ It is sometimes difficult to categorize a scholar’s position. The following survey indicates what appears to be the dominating view.

³⁰ See my much more detailed survey in D. Johansson, “The Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark: Past and Present Proposals,” *CBR* 9 (2011): 364-93.

³¹ H. J. Holzmann, *Die Synoptischen Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und Geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863). For Holzmann’s influence on the subsequent “lives of Jesus” research, see R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 32-39; U. Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (trans. M. E. Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 162-79.

Son of God in a “theocratic” sense, that is, a non-divine royal Messiah.³² But it did not take long before these views were to be turned upside down.

With Wrede’s *Das Messiasgeheimnis* a new phase began. He argued that previous scholars had overestimated the historical value of Mark, but also downplayed its christology. Instead, Wrede insisted that Mark understood “Son of God” (as well as “Messiah”) in a supernatural and divine sense. After Wrede, a consensus soon emerged which would last to about 1970, that Mark’s christology is “high.” While fundamentally disunited on the rationale, German, French, and British scholars, liberal and conservative, were united in the view that Mark’s Jesus was a divine being. Dibelius famously declared that the Gospel of Mark was “written as *a book of secret epiphanies*” and that Jesus was “the visible epiphany of God on earth.”³³ Bultmann concluded that the Second Evangelist united “the Hellenistic kerygma about Christ, whose essential content consists of the Christ-myth [e.g., Phil 2:6-11; Rom 3:24]..., with the tradition of the story of Jesus.”³⁴ In a similar way, Lohmeyer could state in the introduction to his commentary on Mark that, “Der Gottessohn ist nicht zuerst eine menschliche, sondern eine göttliche Gestalt.”³⁵ Although with slightly different approaches, subsequent German scholarship, for the most part, saw Mark as representing a Hellenistic, divine christology.³⁶

While being more optimistic about the historicity of Mark and more cautious about the usefulness of Hellenistic parallels,³⁷ English speaking scholarship of the period also maintains that Mark expresses the faith in the divine, supernatural origin

³² Cf. e.g., H. J. Holzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1911) 1:335-52; Gould, *Mark*, 12, 44.

³³ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 230, 93-95.

³⁴ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 347. Later, however, he viewed Mark as primarily presenting Jesus as a Hellenistic divine man. See Bultmann, *Theology* 1:130-32.

³⁵ Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 4.

³⁶ See e.g., Schreiber, “Christologie,” 154-83; Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, who finds evidence for no less than three different conceptions of the title Son of God; Haenchen, *Markus*, 55; K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium* (SANT 13; München: Kösel-Verlag, 1970); Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*; U. Luz, “Das Jesusbild der vormarkinischen Tradition,” in *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie* (ed. G. Strecker; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1975), 347-74; Koch, *Wundererzählungen*. Not all, however, accepted the Hellenistic background of Mark’s christology. See e.g., A. Schlatter, *Markus: Der Evangelist für die Griechen* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935); Grundmann, *Markus*, 34.

³⁷ Taylor, for example, rejected both Wrede’s version of the Messianic secret (*Mark*, 122-124) and the *theios anēr* approach (*The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* [London: Macmillan, 1935], 119-41. For his view of Jesus’ own self-consciousness, see *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1954) and *The Person of Christ in the New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1958).

of Jesus. Taylor, for example, states that “the Markan Son of God is a Divine Being who appears in human form, whose *dynamis* is manifest in His bearing and speech and in His mighty works” and that “Mark’s christology is a high christology, as high as any in the New Testament, not excluding that of John.”³⁸ Similar views are also expressed in French scholarship.³⁹

A reassessment began, however, in the early 1970’s. New Testament scholarship in general came to attribute more significance to the Jewish background of the NT and Mark was read against this rather than, as earlier, the background of Hellenism. With this followed, for example, often an assumption that Jewish monotheism precludes that Jesus is portrayed as divine and that the designation Son of God must be understood in a non-divine sense of early Judaism. Furthermore, redaction criticism and even more so, literary criticism stressed Mark’s capacity as author. It could be argued that it was possible, even likely, that the author of Mark or his local community embraced a unique christology in tension with the christologies of other Christian communities. Another contributing factor is that an intensive study of christology, which was initiated by the *Myth incarnate* debate,⁴⁰ led to more precise definitions of what is meant by “divinity.” Earlier, a mere attribution of supernatural abilities to Jesus could lead scholars to conclude that Mark’s portrait of Jesus was essentially the Son of God of the classical creeds.

In the following paragraphs, I begin by presenting five different views or categories which share the view that Mark’s Jesus is less than a divine figure. I will then highlight some scholars who continue to defend a high Hellenistic christology before finally looking at those who argue for a divine christology against a biblical/Jewish background.

The Royal Messiah. Many scholars, especially in American New Testament scholarship, returned to the late 19th century view that the Markan Jesus is a non-divine kingly figure and that the designation Son of God should be understood as a

³⁸ Taylor, *Mark*, 121. Cf. further A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Mark*, 1-11; C. E. B. Cranfield, “Mark, Gospel of,” *IDB* 3: 267-77; Nineham, *Mark*, 48-49 (though Nineham is more open to the German approach); Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*; Martin, *Mark*, 84-139. Branscomb, *Mark*, appears to be an exception.

³⁹ Lagrange, *Marc*, cxxxiv-cxl; P. Benoit, “The Divinity of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels,” in idem, *Jesus and the Gospel vol. 1* (London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1973), 47-70; Minette de Tillesse, *Le secret messianique*, 362-36, who is, however, a bit more cautious and states that Mark was not written in order to *demonstrate* that Jesus is the Son of God in a *metaphysical* sense; it is rather presupposed.

⁴⁰ J. Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977).

kingly, messianic title.⁴¹ A recent proponent of this view is A. Yarbro Collins who in a number of publications, including her *Hermeneia* commentary on Mark, has brought Jewish messianic expectations of the Second Temple period to bear on Mark's christology.⁴² Of these, the expectation of a royal Davidic Messiah naturally occupies a prominent position. Collins supports this interpretation not only with evidence from Jewish literature but also with Greco-Roman portrayals of kings and emperors. Particularly notable is the attribution of several divine prerogatives to Jesus which fit into the messianic picture, since, in Collins's view, some of these were expected to be transferred to the Messiah.

The Suffering Righteous One. Other scholars see the Markan Jesus primarily as the suffering righteous son of God.⁴³ Lührmann argues that the title Son of God has its immediate background in Wis 2:12-20 in which the righteous one calls God his father and is himself called a son of God. In his view, Jesus is presented as merely human, on the same level as the OT heroes Moses and Elijah.

Narrative Christologies. Many scholars who employ narrative criticism conclude that Mark's Jesus is a mere man. Rhoads and Michie, for example, state that, "In Mark's story, Jesus is neither God nor a divine being, but a man who is given authority by God."⁴⁴ In their view, Jesus "discovers" his authority, his limits (for example, that he is not God and that he cannot save himself), and his mission over the course of his activity. For Broadhead, who has published no less than three

⁴¹ D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977); F. J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus: Composition and Theology in Mark 15* (SBLDS 66; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); J. D. Kingsbury, *Christology*; idem, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989). The impact the royal-messianic interpretation has had on Markan scholarship is seen in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article on the Gospel of Mark. See P. J. Achtemeier, "Mark, Gospel of," *ABD* 4:541-557. The royal Messiah interpretation was anticipated by P. Vielhauer in 1964, in a famous essay where he raised serious criticism against previous German scholarship. See "Erwägungen zur Christologie des Markusevangeliums," in idem, *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (München: Kaiser, 1965), 199-215.

⁴² In addition to her 2007 commentary, see e.g., "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *HTR* 92 (1999): 393-408; A. Yarbro Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴³ Lührmann, *Markus*; E. Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 79-82; Schnelle, *New Testament Writings*, 209.

⁴⁴ D. M. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 105. Cf. further R. C. Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16 (1980): 57-95; C. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge und Zukunftserwartung nach Markus: Eine methodkritische Studie* (ATANT 71; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984), who views Mark's Jesus primarily as the sent one who surpasses all the prophets (262); O. Davidsen, *The Narrative Jesus: A Semiotic Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993), esp. 334-38.

monographs on Mark's christology, Jesus is primarily a prophetic figure who is endowed with the power of God.⁴⁵ He also finds one of the most primitive christologies of the NT in Mark, one where Jesus is exalted to Lord only at the *parousia*.⁴⁶

Lack of Preexistence. Some scholars argue that Mark lacks the concept of preexistence and stress, more than others, its implications for our assessment of Mark's christology. The most well-known of these is Dunn's *Christology in the Making*, which focuses solely on the origin of the doctrine of incarnation.⁴⁷ Neither Son of God passages nor Son of Man sayings in Mark imply any thought of preexistence, according to Dunn, and more exalted portrayals of Jesus, such as the transfiguration scene, are merely seen as anticipatory and foreshadowing Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. Dautzenberg and Kuschel go a step further when they claim that this alleged lack of preexistence in Mark must be seen as a decision against the tradition of preexistence found in the Gospel of John and therefore also the tradition that resulted in the classical creeds.⁴⁸ In Dautzenberg's words: "Nicht alle neutestamentlichen Christologien münden in den Dogmen von Nicea und Chalcedon."⁴⁹

The Constraint of Jewish Monotheism. Some scholars have approached the question of Jesus' identity from a different angle and argued that Jewish monotheism would make it impossible for Jewish Christians to view Jesus as divine. Such a step was only taken when Christianity had broken out of the matrix of Judaism. Thus, for example, Casey contends that Mark and the two other synoptic Evangelists "portray Jesus as a person of the highest status and of fundamental function in salvation history." But since their christologies are determined by the self-identification of

⁴⁵ E. K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority: Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 74; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); idem, *Prophet, Son, Messiah: Narrative Form and Function in Mark 14-16* (JSNTSup 97; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); idem, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ Broadhead, *Naming*, 142-44.

⁴⁷ J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), ix.

⁴⁸ G. Dautzenberg, "Sohn Gottes in Evangelium nach Markus," in idem, *Studien zur Theologie der Jesustradition* (SBAB 19; Stuttgart: Katolisches Bibelwerk, 1995), 98-105; K.-J. Kuschel, *Born before all Time?: The Dispute over Christ's Origin* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1992), 308-16.

⁴⁹ Dautzenberg, "Sohn Gottes," 104.

their communities which consist of *both* Jewish and Gentile members, “none of them portrays him as fully divine.”⁵⁰

One of few studies which is directly concerned with the question of Jesus’ relationship to God in Mark is the dissertation by Marín.⁵¹ He asks whether Chalcedon’s affirmation of Jesus Christ as both truly divine and truly human can find support in the Gospel of Mark. The outcome is negative. Mark’s Jesus is a merely human being who was entrusted with divine functions. In the first part, he argues that there is no trace of the idea of a Virgin birth; Jesus’ nature is fully and only human, which is demonstrated by his sharing in the human tendency to sin, although this was overcome by the gift of the Spirit. In the second part, Marín examines Jesus’ authority and his relationship to God, concluding that Jesus’ authority is supernatural, but ‘not consubstantial to him’; it is a gift from God, given partly because of God’s free choice, partly because of Jesus’ unique faith and confidence. Marín’s final conclusion is, however, quite confusing. While Marín contends that Mark’s christology stands in sharp contrast to the Chalcedonian, he can nevertheless state that,

both the Fathers and Mark understood that Jesus is meaningful only when he unifies in himself both God and man... The Fathers tried to do that through the two-natures doctrine. Mark uses for that the concept of Jesus’ faith-authority. Thus, in the essential the Fathers and Mark agree that Jesus is truly God and truly man (p. 252).

Finally, we may also note the common view that Mark’s christology is far lower than John’s.⁵² Brown expresses the view of many when he states that, “Johannine christology is very familiar to traditional Christians because it became the dominant christology of the church, and it is startling to realize that such a portrayal of Jesus is

⁵⁰ M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 156. For Casey, the Gospel of John is the only NT writing in which Jesus is divine. According to A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 154-73, the first unambiguous case of Jesus being described as divine is found in Ignatius of Antioch’s writings. Cf. also the discussion of NT christologies which can be seen as a threat to or departure from Jewish monotheism in J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London, SCM, 1991), 207-29.

⁵¹ J.-J. Marín, *The Christology of Mark: Does Mark’s Christology Support the Chalcedonian Formula ‘Truly Man and Truly God’?* (European University Studies Series 23, vol. 417; Bern: Peter Lang, 1991).

⁵² Cf. e.g., Taylor’s assessment that Mark is not lower than John.

quite foreign to the Synoptic Gospels. With justice Johannine christology can be called the highest in the NT.”⁵³

Not all scholars have, however, been convinced of the thesis that Mark’s Jesus is a mere human being. To these we turn now.

Hellenistic High Christology. Some exegetes defend a high christology in Mark along the lines of Dibelius and Bultmann. In Räisänen’s view, Jesus “is a supra-terrestrial being,” whose divinity is brought out in the miracles. He further contends that one of the purposes of Mark is to defend a high Hellenistic christology against a low “futurist Son of Man Christology,” represented by the Q tradition.⁵⁴

Dibelius’ characterization of Mark’s Gospel as a book of secret epiphanies has found support in Frenschkowski’s study of revelation and epiphany in Late Antiquity.⁵⁵ The nature miracles, in particular, “*offenbaren das verborgene wahre Wesen des irdischen Jesus.*”⁵⁶ Moreover, the reactions to these, which reflect typical human responses to epiphanies and which are accentuated by Mark, confirm the epiphanic character of the miracles. Frenschkowski also argues that the semantic fields of “coming” (particularly “I have come” sayings) and “sending” (12:1-11; 9:37) point to a heavenly, supernatural origin of Jesus and implies a preexistence christology “in statu nascendi.”

Other Approaches Ascribing a High Christology to Mark. One of the first to question the royal messianic interpretation of Mark’s christology was Davis in his 1979 PhD dissertation.⁵⁷ While rejecting the *theios anēr* christology, he proceeds

⁵³ R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 45. Brown, however, does not exclude a divine christology in the Synoptic Gospels. In *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1994), Brown says that “all the Gospels, and, in my judgment, all the NT books where the issue arises, treat Jesus as divine even if divinity is expressed in different ways. Important in judging ‘the highest christology’ are the clarity and unambiguity of a particular book’s articulation of his divinity” (123, n. 184).

⁵⁴ Räisänen, *Messianic Secret*, 193, 217-18, 247-58. Similar views are expressed by Telford, *Mark*, 31, 102. Cf. also J. Schreiber, *Die Markuspasion: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (2nd ed.; BZNW 68; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 362-413, who contends that the Gnostic redeemer myth is present in Mark.

⁵⁵ Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 2:148-224.

⁵⁶ Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 2:212 (emphasis his).

⁵⁷ P. G. Davis, “‘Truly this man was the Son of God’: The Christological Focus of the Markan Redaction” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1979). The result of the dissertation has appeared in two articles: “Mark’s Christological Paradox,” *JSNT* 35 (1989): 3-18 and “Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Shifting Horizons* (ed. D. J. Hawkin and T. Robinson; Studies in Bible and Early Christianity 26; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 101-19.

under the assumption that Mark was written for the Christian world mission. He argues that Mark, just as pre-Pauline formulas and Paul himself, affirms both the humanity and divinity of Jesus. According to Davis, Mark's worldview is based on the notion of a divine-human dichotomy. He shows how Mark emphasized Jesus' humanity while at the same time also indicating that it is transcended. Jesus' preaching, teaching, healings, and exorcisms set him apart from all other men and ascribe a transcendent status to him. This is also implied by the astonishment Jesus arouses, his authority over sin and Sabbath laws, and the description of the *parousia* where Jesus will act in the place of God. Davis suggests that we should speak of Jesus' divinity in Mark in a "broad sense of heavenly nature with status above all but God the Father" (155). Jesus is on the divine side, an intrinsic part of the "*divine hierarchy*" (my italics) which include God and the angels, subordinate to the Father but superior to the angels.

Boring, likewise, points to the divine-human dichotomy in Mark.⁵⁸ He notes that two kinds of language are used for Jesus: on the one hand he is portrayed as human, like us, on the other as divine, not like us. Unlike Davis, he also rejects the presence of a general category for the "divine." Mark does not utilize typical Hellenistic language for the divine and his explicit God-language is reserved for the one God of Israel. The paradox is that Mark at the same time applies God-language to Jesus. Boring refers to 19 passages in which Mark is describing the man Jesus in the role of Israel's God.⁵⁹ Although no one is compelling in itself, these suggest, in Boring's view, that Mark affirmed Jesus' deity. The christologies of later NT authors and the classical creeds can therefore be said to be in continuity with what is present in Mark.

Trakatellis argues that there are two aspects of Mark's picture of Jesus: a christology of authority and a christology of passion.⁶⁰ The former of these intends to emphasize Jesus' "supernatural authority and power" and the latter "Jesus' humanity." Trakatellis argues for a very lofty Markan christology, essentially that of Chalcedon. He refers to the human and divine "hypostasis" of Jesus and claims that

⁵⁸ M. E. Boring, "The Christology of Mark: Hermeneutical Issues for Systematic Theology," *Semeia* 30 (1984): 125-53; idem, "Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus?" *NTS* 45 (1999): 451-71.

⁵⁹ Mark 1:2-3, 11, 16-20, 23-7; 2:1-12; 4:35-41; 5:6; 6:48, 50; 7:1-23; 9:2-8, 37; 12:1-11, 35-7; 13:6, 13, 31; 14:60-4; 15:39.

⁶⁰ D. Trakatellis, *Authority and Passion: Christological Aspects of the Gospel according to Mark* (trans. G. K. Duvall and H. Vulopas; Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987).

Mark's balance between authority and suffering serves to balance the two natures of Christ. Although this, in my view, is to overstate the case, he nevertheless offers abundant evidence that Jesus is more than human. Basically drawing on what has been pointed out by other scholars he organizes the evidence for Jesus' divine authority in nine different categories. Jesus has authority 1) over the demonic world; 2) over the natural world; 3 over illness; 4) over sin; 5) over religious institutions; 6) over natural institutions of family relationship; 7) to create new relationships 8) Jesus has supernatural ability; 9) and knows the truth of mankind and its salvation (114-26). Trakatellis refers in most of these cases to Jesus' supernatural abilities, but there are also several attempts to compare and establish a connection between Jesus' actions and those of God in the OT. An extensive discussion of the passages in question is lacking, however.

Another who has highlighted the high christology of Mark without direct appeal to Hellenistic categories is Marcus. This is especially clear in his study of Mark's OT citations.⁶¹ Marcus here combines a redaction-critical approach with concern for the narrative, and pays special attention to early Jewish and Christian interpretations of the OT texts used by Mark. In his discussion of the Transfiguration narrative he argues that a Moses typology is central to the pericope, but this does not imply a low christology. In the light of Jewish traditions about Moses becoming a god at Sinai, Jesus may also be attributed a status that transcends the human. On the basis of the Isaiah citation in Mark 1:2-3, Marcus argues that a close connection exists between YHWH and Jesus, since the *way of Jesus* is identified with the *way of YHWH* (37-41). Jesus is, however, not identified with YHWH. Mark combined, according to Marcus, "a recognition of the separateness of the two figures with a recognition of their inseparability" (39). This argument is further developed in the discussion of the *Shema* and the exalted status attributed to Jesus in the citation of Ps 110 (Mark 12:28-37). It is suggested that the function of the *Shema* citation is to ward off any misunderstandings of Ps 110 in the sense of bitheism. Mark maintains that God is one; the enthroned Christ is still subordinate to God. In short, Marcus argues that Mark's use of OT texts ties Jesus closely to God – he is God's son in a

⁶¹ J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); cf. also "Mark 14:61: 'Are you the Messiah-Son-of-God?'," *NovT* 31 (1989): 125-41 and his two-volume Anchor Bible commentary on Mark.

“quasi-divine” sense,⁶² a divine agent with much of God’s authority – and that Mark maintains a clear distinction between the two.

Gathercole’s study *The Preexistent Son* primarily provides evidence that the thought of a preexistent Jesus is present in the Synoptic Gospels.⁶³ In order to prepare the way for his thesis, he also devotes one chapter to some discussion of the overall presentation of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. He finds that Jesus *transcends* three different divides: the Heaven-Earth divide, the God-creation divide, and the pre- and post-resurrection divide. The various passages in which he finds transcendence are then organized into subcategories which he discusses briefly. Many of the passages which appear frequently in discussions of Mark’s christology are represented: the transfiguration, Jesus’ authority to forgive sins, the blasphemy accusation, the sea miracles, and Jesus’ supernatural knowledge. But there are also other passages discussed more seldom, such as Jesus’ election of the twelve and the use of Jesus’ name. Gathercole concludes that the Synoptic Gospels give an “extremely exalted portrait” of Jesus at the same time as they also stress Jesus’ genuine humanity, and his subordination to the Father (79).⁶⁴

To sum up, recent years have seen a variety of approaches to Mark’s christology and significantly varying results. A majority, so it seems, contends that Mark’s Jesus is an exalted, but merely human figure. Scholars of this opinion for the most part interpret Mark against a Jewish background. Some scholars continue to defend a high, Hellenistically influenced christology, while another group of scholars find that Mark’s Jesus is transcendent and/or in some sense divine against the background of the OT and early Judaism.

⁶² Marcus, “Mark 14:61,” 141.

⁶³ S. J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶⁴ Other studies which represent a high Christology in Mark include L. Schenke, *Das Markusevangelium* (Urban-Taschenbücher; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988), 106-17; idem, “Gibt es im Markusevangelium eine Präexistenzchristologie?” *ZNW* 91 (2000): 45-71. Schenke is primarily concerned with the question of preexistence. J. C. Naluparayil, *The Identity of Jesus in Mark: An Essay on Narrative Christology* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta 49; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2000), argues that the title “Son of Man” stands for the *divine person* present in Jesus. Jesus’ divine sonship is asserted throughout, but there is little discussion of how and why the passages in question imply Jesus’ divinity and very little interaction with the arguments to the contrary.

1.2. The Approach of this Study

In order to define my own approach and indicate how this study is related to previous scholarship on Mark, I shall here highlight some of the assumptions under which past research on Mark's christology has been carried out and which have had significant impact on the interpretation of Mark's christology. I will then, in the light of my discussion of these, state my own position. Finally, I summarize my own approach in three key points, before providing a brief outline of this study.

1.2.1. Mark's Christology and Methodology

What do we mean by Mark's, that is, the Evangelist's christology? This question has been answered in different ways in earlier scholarship. In the period when *Formgeschichte* was the dominating method and Mark and the other Evangelists were seen as collectors of tradition, they were simply thought to have reflected the theology of their predecessors.⁶⁵ In Mark's case, Bultmann argued that he was a Hellenistic Christian of the Pauline circle,⁶⁶ and his christology therefore of a Pauline type. At the same time, since the Gospels were seen as mere collections of traditions, they could contain more than one christology. In his influential study of titles, Hahn interpreted these in the light of their *religionsgeschichtliche* parallels and found no less than three different Son of God concepts in Mark, which he assigned to Palestinian Jewish Christianity, Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, and Gentile Christianity, respectively.⁶⁷

The Evangelists received a higher estimation as authors and theologians in their own right when the exegetes began to practice *Redaktionsgeschichte* in the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁸ Yet, the focus on how they had edited the material that came down to them tended to limit the Evangelists' christological contributions precisely to their redaction of the material, especially in summaries and seams where their

⁶⁵ On the importance of methodology and its consequences in the study of Mark's christology, see L. Chouinard, "Gospel Christology: A Study of Methodology," *JSNT* 30 (1987): 21-37. Helpful surveys of the dominating methods in the critical study of Mark are found in Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 6-22; F. J. Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2004), 19-43.

⁶⁶ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 253.

⁶⁷ Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 287-319. See n. 26 and 27 above.

⁶⁸ The first major study on Mark was W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959).

hands have been clearest, while leaving the material they simply “passed on” outside the picture.

It was only in the late 1970’s with the emergence of *narrative criticism* that Mark and the other Evangelists were fully appreciated as authors in their own right, seen as literary artists in full control of their pens.⁶⁹ According to Tolbert, the most important assumption in this literary perspective is that “Mark is a self-consciously crafted narrative, a fiction, resulting from literary imagination, not photographic recall.”⁷⁰ This does not, however, mean that the story has no connection with events in history. Rather, it “serves to underscore the selection, construction, and choice behind the story it tells” and that “a narrative is unified and coherent.”⁷¹ In other words, focus shifted from the use of sources and the redaction of these to the text itself. This kind of reading is sensitive to Mark’s use of various literary techniques,⁷² such as chiasms, “sandwiches” (the beginning of narrative which is then interrupted before being resumed again [e.g., Mark 5:21-43]),⁷³ and rhetorical irony,⁷⁴ and pays special attention to intratextual links.⁷⁵ Consequently, the christology of Mark is not seen as limited to the Evangelist’s own unique contributions as in redaction criticism, but includes the entire picture of Jesus which is developed in the story.⁷⁶

This study shares many of the presuppositions of narrative criticism. It is concerned with the *final text* of the Gospel of Mark.⁷⁷ It pays little attention to questions of traditions and sources. What is of interest is *how the Evangelist portrayed Jesus*, the Jesus of the narrative of Mark. Many insights from literary criticism will thus be useful. But this study does *not*, as did many early narrative studies, limit the analysis to the “narrative world” of Mark and treat the text as a

⁶⁹ This was, however, already in 1963 pointed out by S. Sandmel, “Prolegomena to a Commentary on Mark,” *JBR* 31 (1963): 294-300.

⁷⁰ M. A. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 30.

⁷¹ Tolbert, *Sowing*, 30.

⁷² On Mark’s skill as an author, see e.g., M. A. Beavis, *Mark’s Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11-12* (JSNTSup 33; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 13-44.

⁷³ J. R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives,” *NovT* 31 (1989): 193-216.

⁷⁴ J. Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel: Text and Subtext* (SNTSMS 72; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁷⁵ Cf. for instance, the links between 2:7 and 14:64 discussed in chapter 3.

⁷⁶ Cf. Tannehill, “Christology,” 58.

⁷⁷ With the large majority of scholars, I share the view that Mark’s original text ends at 16:8.

closed system. Since the focus of this study is on what Mark intended to communicate about Jesus to his first-century audience, and since communication is always embedded in culture and assumes shared cultural presuppositions,⁷⁸ this study will also analyze the biblical and cultural backgrounds of the story. It makes, for example, a great deal of difference for the understanding of the Gospel if the Evangelist intended it to be read in the light of the OT. To take one example, Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι saying in 6:50 would without the biblical context only be understood as Jesus' way of identifying himself to his disciples. But the words may have other, *divine* connotations if they are read in the light of the Greek Bible where they serve as a self-declaration of YHWH's absolute uniqueness.⁷⁹ A "closed" reading of this passage would miss this link to the OT which may be significant for Mark's view of Jesus. It is, then, perhaps not so surprising that many early narrative studies viewed Mark's christology as "low."⁸⁰

The question is now what kind of knowledge Mark presupposed that his audience would have.⁸¹ To begin with, it is clear that he did not expect that the audience (at least not most of them) would know Aramaic, since Aramaic expressions are translated. But he assumed that they would possess a great deal of specific knowledge which is left unexplained, including main characters (e.g., John; 1:4), places (e.g., Capernaum; 1:21), symbols (e.g., the significance of twelve disciples; 3:14-15), and Jewish religious traditions (e.g., Sabbath; 1:21; Passover; 14:1).⁸² Furthermore, Mark expected his intended readers to be familiar with the OT

⁷⁸ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2nd rev. ed.; New York: Continuum, 1994; orig. German ed. 1960); M. Stubbs, *Discourse Analysis: The Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 8. Cf. also J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making: Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 204-05 with the literature cited.

⁷⁹ See 6.4 below.

⁸⁰ Cf e.g., Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, mentioned in the above survey. There are, however, strict narrative studies which conclude that Mark's Jesus is divine. See D. H. Johnson, "The Characterization of Jesus in Mark," *Did* 10 (1999): 79-92; H. L. Chronis, "To Reveal and to Conceal: A Literary-Critical Perspective on the 'Son of Man' in Mark," *NTS* 51 (2005): 459-81. P. L. Danove, *The End of Mark's Story: A Methodological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), using a structuralist method of plot analysis in combination with a phenomenological model of narrative communication, also concludes that Mark's christology is "high" (188).

⁸¹ In discourse analysis one speaks of a "presupposition pool," that is, a pool of knowledge that the author can assume the audience possesses. See J. B. Green, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. J. B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 175-96, 185.

⁸² For a survey, see Stein, *Mark*, 9-10. Stein concludes that the original audience was familiar with the Gospel traditions and the Judaism of the first century. In his structural analysis, Danove, *End of Mark's Story*, 187, reaches a similar conclusion: the audience had "previous familiarity with much of

writings in its Greek form. The Gospel refers to figures such as Isaiah, Moses, David, Elijah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob without explanations. A number of citations, explicit⁸³ as well as unIntroduced,⁸⁴ are included. The audience is, moreover, expected to grasp a good number of allusions to and echoes of the OT.⁸⁵ It is, in other words, clear that Mark expected his story to be interpreted in the light of the Jewish Scriptures. But it is also obvious that each member of the audience would bring his or her own general knowledge and experience to the text. A careful analysis of both the biblical and historical background of Mark's narrative is therefore central in this thesis.⁸⁶

To sum up, this study *combines a careful study of Mark's narrative and its intratextual links with a close examination of its religionsgeschichtliche background, its intertextual links to the OT and the wider cultural context, in order to reconstruct a probable historical meaning of the text as it was intended for the original readers or hearers.*

1.2.2. Judaism and Hellenism and Mark's Audience

The second issue which needs to be raised concerns the question of "Judaism" and "Hellenism." Much discussion of both the historical development of early Christian views of Jesus as well as Mark's christology has, namely, proceeded under the assumption of a clear-cut distinction between "Judaism" and "Hellenism."

This distinction was crucial to the extremely influential model of the christological development in early Christianity, which Bousset, one of the leading representatives of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, published in 1913 under the

the content of the stories relating the ministry of Jesus and with the Septuagint, especially those passages used to interpret the significance of Jesus."

⁸³ 1:2-3 (Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Exod 23:20); 7:6 (Isa 29:13); 11:17 (Isa 56:7); 12:10-11 (Ps 118:22-23); 12:36 (Ps 110:1); 14:27 (Zech 13:7).

⁸⁴ E.g., 4:12 (Isa 6:9-10); 8:18 (Jer 5:21); 10:19 (Exod 20:12-16); 11:9 (Ps 118:26); 12:26 (Exod 3:6); 12:29-31 (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18); 15:34 (Ps 22:1).

⁸⁵ On Mark's use of the OT, see esp. Marcus, *Way*; R. E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (WUNT 2:88; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1997); idem, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 111-249.

⁸⁶ Thus, I agree with the method set forth by e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), xiv. On the general importance of the context, see G. Brown and G. Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 27-67; P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), 68-72; Moloney, *Storyteller*, 35.

title *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*.⁸⁷ He viewed the development as a gradual process of syncretistic paganization,⁸⁸ and argued that the earliest Palestinian Jewish Christian community saw the risen Jesus as the Son of Man, a figure thought to be widely known in first century Judaism, and who would return and act as God's agent in the eschatological judgment. Only at a second stage, in the "Hellenistic Gentile" church and under the influence of the various divine figures in the Greco-Roman world was Jesus seen as the divine *Kyrios*. It was this form of Christianity Paul encountered at his conversion. The beliefs of Gentile Christianity are therefore both presupposed and developed in Paul's epistles. Further divinization of Jesus can then be traced in the Johannine writings, and when we reach the second century a heavily paganized christology can be seen in the writings of theologians such as Ignatius and Irenaeus.

Many past interpretations of Mark's christology have assumed not only a strong dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism, but also that Bousset's description of the christological development was essentially correct.⁸⁹ Bultmann, for example, argued that Mark portrayed Jesus as divine and placed the Gospel in Gentile Christianity, whereas Broadhead, in one of his recent narrative studies of Mark, claims that Mark's Jesus is the *Kyrios*-designate who only becomes Lord at the parousia, and concludes accordingly that Mark provides an early form of a *primitive christology*.⁹⁰

However, the dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism that was crucial to Bousset's theory has been shown to be simplistic. In an important study, Hengel demonstrated that Jews had encountered Hellenistic culture and language for three centuries by the time of Jesus, and all forms of Jewish culture of the Hellenistic

⁸⁷ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913; rev. ed. 1921); ET: *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. J. E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), from the 1964 German edition. For a brief introduction to the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, see W. Baird, *History of New Testament Research: Vol. 2: From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolf Bultmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 238-52.

⁸⁸ It should be observed that Bousset (in contrast to scholars who find the earliest traces of a divine Jesus in the Johannine writings toward the end of the first century) argued that Jesus became viewed as divine within a few years of his death and resurrection. Bousset placed the Hellenistic Gentile christology (in which Jesus was seen as the divine Lord) prior to the conversion of Paul so that it could influence Paul.

⁸⁹ For a survey of the general reception of Bousset's model, including critical responses, see Hurtado, "Christ-Devotion," 17-33.

⁹⁰ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 347; Broadhead, *Naming Jesus*, 142-44.

Roman period were to varying degrees “Hellenistic.”⁹¹ Furthermore, Judaism, even in Palestine, before 70 C.E. was extremely pluralistic. What could and could not have been accommodated by Palestinian Jews is not as clear-cut as Bousset assumed. Much that he and subsequent scholarship assumed to be a *direct* influence of pagan religious ideas on early Christianity is now thought to have originated in a Jewish Christian setting.

Bousset’s model has, as a result, been seriously challenged, and a new, considerably different picture has been offered by a group of scholars, sometimes referred to as the “new *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.”⁹² In contrast to Bousset’s view that Jesus began to be viewed as divine only at a secondary stage in Gentile Christianity, these scholars contend that a high christology was in place very early *among Jewish Christian* believers in Palestine and that this faith was communicated by means of Jewish concepts and categories, rather than Hellenistic ones.⁹³

The implication of this new picture of the earliest beliefs in Jesus is considerable for the study of Mark’s christology. Past discussions of it have often presented a choice between either a *divine Hellenistic* Jesus or a *non-divine Jewish* Jesus. We saw above that one consequence of the higher appreciation of the OT/Jewish background of Mark which began in the early 1970’s was a lower christology. But if the new *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* is correct about the development of early christology it cannot a priori be excluded that Mark *both* maintains a basic Jewishness and presents a divine Jesus. In other words, a divine christology does not necessarily imply a break with Jewish monotheism.

If the distinction between Judaism and Hellenism is problematic with regard to the *origins* of christological ideas, it is not less so when we come to the interpretation of a text that is obviously written for an audience which consisted of

⁹¹ M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (2 vols.; trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1974; orig. Germ. ed., 1969).

⁹² For this label, see, J. E. Fossum, “The New *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*: The Quest for Jewish Christology,” *SBLSP* 30 (1991): 638-46.

⁹³ The most important work is L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), which also sums up the results of many other studies. See also the important contributions by R. J. Bauckham in e.g., *Jesus and the God of Israel: ‘God Crucified’ and other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008). Bauckham claims that “the earliest Christology was already the highest Christology” (x).

both Gentile and Jewish Christians.⁹⁴ Take, for example, the transfiguration story. Much discussion of this pericope has proceeded under the assumption of either a Jewish or a Hellenistic background of the story.⁹⁵ But Mark's audience was in all likelihood informed by both cultural contexts. Those of a non-Jewish background would probably bring their knowledge of Greco-Roman traditions about metamorphosis of gods to the text, while also being informed by their knowledge of the Jewish scripture, and recognize echoes of Moses' and Elijah's encounters with God on Sinai/Horeb. On the other hand, those of Jewish background would bring their Jewish traditions to the text, but it cannot be excluded that many of them also were familiar with Greco-Roman traditions and that these, at least to some extent, also influenced their interpretation.

This study, therefore, takes both the biblical/Jewish and the Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds into account.⁹⁶ In fact, when these converge, as they do surprisingly often, the plausibility of a particular interpretation is considerably strengthened. The story of Jesus walking on water is a good illustration of this. Since God alone walks on water in the OT and early Jewish literature, Jesus apparently acts like God. The probability that the audience would interpret it as a divine act is, however, reinforced by the fact that the capacity to walk on water is a divine prerogative also in Greco-Roman traditions.

⁹⁴ It is generally acknowledged that Gentile Christians constituted a majority in Mark's audience. Scholars have pointed to the fact that Mark explains some Jewish traditions in 7:3-5 and his emphasis that OT rules concerning clean and unclean food were no longer binding (7:19). We must also assume the possibility that other people than Christians sometimes heard the Gospel read. D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 59-60, notes that Christian households often included non-Christian members. It should also be noted that scholars almost unanimously favour a provenance for Mark outside Palestine, either in Rome (M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* [London: SCM, 1985], 1-30) or the Roman province of Syria (Marcus, *Mark*, 33-37).

⁹⁵ See chapter 7.

⁹⁶ I here join A. Yarbro Collins, who consistently carries through this approach in her Hermeneia commentary on Mark. Cf. her comments in "Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45-52)" in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competitions in the New Testament World*, ed. L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici, A. Standhartinger (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 212, and her two studies "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *HTR* 92 (1999): 393-408 and "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *HTR* 93 (2000): 85-100. See further D. Zeller, "New Testament Christology in its Hellenistic Reception," *NTS* 46 (2001): 312-33. Cf. also Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 74-77.

1.2.3. Situating this Study

The approach of this study can, in the light of the above discussion and the survey of previous research, be summarized in three key points:

First, it asks the fundamental question how Mark relates Jesus to the one God of Israel⁹⁷ and argues that the overlap between the presentation of Jesus and the presentation of God in the OT/Jewish tradition which is evident in Mark has significant implications for Mark's view of Jesus. Many previous studies have either overlooked this kind of evidence or neglected its significance. Some recent contributions have, as was seen in the above survey, observed the phenomenon and argued that Mark viewed Jesus as divine, but these studies lack a thorough discussion of it.⁹⁸ This study will therefore provide an extensive analysis of the OT and early Jewish texts⁹⁹ where the Markan picture of Jesus may overlap with that of YHWH. While we occasionally shall look at allusions to specific OT passages, the primary focus is on the overall depiction of God in the Jewish tradition. Focusing on this overlap between the portrayal of Jesus in Mark's narrative and God also means that this study is not concerned with titles. I will have reason to comment on some of them now and then, but they are not the focus of this study.

Second, this study also advances previous discussions by not playing off what we may call a Jewish cultural context against a Greco-Roman. Instead, assuming that both author¹⁰⁰ and audience to various degrees were familiar with both contexts, it also includes discussion of Greco-Roman evidence when it seems to be relevant for the discussion. (These traditions are irrelevant when, for example, Mark is concerned with the fulfilment of Scriptural promises.)

⁹⁷ Cf. F. J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 204: "Nothing is more important in the study of New Testament Christology than determining how a particular writing relates Christ to God since this relationship defines who Christ is."

⁹⁸ This cannot be said about Marcus' *The Way of the Lord*, but his study is limited to citations of the OT. Other studies, such as those of Trakatellis and Naluparayil include this kind of evidence, but there is little critical discussion of it.

⁹⁹ "Early Jewish literature" primarily refers to Jewish texts outside the Hebrew Bible which with some degree of certainty can be dated to before ca 70 C.E., the approximate date of Mark's writing according to the majority of scholars, which also coincides with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. However, given the uncertainty that surrounds the dating of some texts as well as the possibility that later texts include earlier traditions, I regularly include references to Pseudepigraphic writings that are somewhat later (e.g., *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*) and I also occasionally include early rabbinic material in my discussion. The same applies to the use of Greco-Roman texts.

¹⁰⁰ On the Evangelist's education and training in Greek, see Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 20-42.

Third, any study of the question of Jesus' divinity must also take seriously the question of Jewish monotheism and recent scholarly discussion of this. Mark's strong emphasis of this has, as we shall see, implications for the question of Jesus' identity. However, unlike some studies surveyed above, which argue that adherence to Jewish monotheism precludes Jesus from being viewed as divine, the argument of this study is that Mark's emphasis of Jewish monotheism brings Jesus closer to God. *It will be argued that Mark neither placed Jesus in a general, Hellenistic category of superhuman or divine beings, nor ascribed only a general transcendent status to him, but linked Jesus directly and closely to Israel's God on the divine side of the God/creation divide, while at the same time maintaining a clear distinction between the two.*

1.2.4. Outline of this Study

The bulk of this study is devoted to an analysis of what I regard to be the most important evidence for Mark's close linking of Jesus to God. The discussion of these passages follows the order of their appearance in the narrative (chapters 2-8). If a passage gives cause for discussion of themes found elsewhere in Mark the analysis of these is included in the passage in question. Chapter 9 focuses on the question of Jesus' relationship to his followers and looks at evidence found throughout Mark, whereas chapter 10 is devoted to a brief discussion of other evidence of Jesus acting in divine roles. The final chapter looks at the humanity of Jesus and the emphasis of monotheism in Mark, before summarizing the evidence discussed in earlier chapters and drawing final conclusions regarding Mark's view of Jesus.

2. Jesus and YHWH in Mark's Prologue

2.1. Introduction

The beginning of a story is crucially important.¹ According to Aristotle, it should give “an indication of what is to be said so that hearers can know beforehand what the work is about.”² And other ancient authors shared his conviction. Given the physical form of ancient books, which did not allow their readers to quickly skim through them, this is what should be expected; it was simply necessary that the first sentences indicated the content of the writing.³

There are no reasons to believe that Mark was different from other ancient authors in this regard.⁴ Consequently, there is a strong probability that the things the Evangelist has to say about his main character Jesus at the very outset of his Gospel are important indicators of his own understanding of Jesus and also significant for how the audience will interpret the story that unfolds. This means, then, that evidence of a close linking of Jesus to Israel's God in this context indicates that this aspect of Jesus' identity is a priority on the Evangelist's christological agenda.

We begin by looking at the opening sentence (1:1-3), and turn thereafter to the remainder of the prologue (1:4-13).⁵

2.2. The Application of OT YHWH Texts to Jesus

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, [Son of God],⁶ [2] as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before

¹ See e.g., F. J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel,” *JSNT* 34 (1988): 3-20; M. E. Boring, “Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel,” *Semeia* 52 (1990):43-81; R. E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (WUNT 2:88; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1997), 54-57. Cf. also H.-J. Klauck, *Vorspiel im Himmel? Erzähltechnik und Theologie im Markusprolog* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 32; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1997).

² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1414b, cited after Watts, *New Exodus*, 54.

³ See D. Earl, “Prologue-form in Ancient Historiography,” *ANRW* I:2:842-56, esp. 856.

⁴ Watts, *New Exodus*, 54.

⁵ Recent commentators are divided over the extent of the prologue, some arguing that it ends in v. 13 and others in v. 15 (see Matera, “Prologue,” 4-6; Collins, *Mark*, 133; Stein, *Mark*, 38). The change of locality and the fact that Jesus becomes active seem to suggest that 1:14-15 begins a new section.

⁶ R. A. Guelich has argued convincingly that 1:1 is not an independent titular sentence, but that 1:1 together with 1:2-3 constitute the opening sentence of the work. He points, for example, to the fact that the formula καὶ ὡς γέγραπται never introduces a new sentence when used as introductory

your face, who shall prepare your way; [3] a voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”
Mark 1:1-3

From a christological point of view, the opening lines of Mark are intense. Granted the title “Son of God” was originally there,⁷ three major Markan titles of Jesus appear in the very first sentence of the gospel: Christ, Son of God, and Lord.⁸ Even though “Christ” probably does not primarily function as a title here, but as a name, since it is joined with Jesus,⁹ it nevertheless carries messianic significance and points forward to Peter’s confession in 8:29. Son of God, likewise, points forward to three pivotal passages where Jesus is given this designation (1:11; 9:7; 15:39). Both these titles, however, have a polyvalent character and can evoke various meanings. The messianic expectations in early Judaism were, as is well-known, diverse,¹⁰ and the title “Son of God” could have a number of different referents. For non-Jewish Hellenistic readers it would certainly imply that Jesus is a divine figure,¹¹ but in the biblical literature it is variously used of angelic beings (Gen 6:2; Job 1:6), Israel (Exod 4:22; Hosea 11:1), the king (Ps 2:7), and the righteous individual (Wis 2:16-20), and in Qumran it had possibly become a messianic title (4QFlor/4Q174).¹² It is only by looking at the gospel in its entirety we will find out how Mark understands

formula. See “‘The Beginning of the Gospel Mark’ 1:1-15,” *BR* 27 (1982): 5-15; cf. also e.g., Gundry, *Mark*, 30-31; Watts, *New Exodus*, 55-56; Marcus, *Mark*, 141-42.

⁷ The words υἱοῦ θεοῦ are missing in some early MS (e.g., \aleph^* Θ). The view that they have been inserted at later stage, defended by e.g., P. M. Head, “A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1:1,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 621-29; B. D. Ehrman, “The Text of Mark in the Hands of the Orthodox,” *LQ* 5 (1991): 143-56; A. Yarbro Collins, “Establishing the Text: Mark 1:1,” in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts* (ed. T. Fornberg and D. Hellholm; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 111-27, has recently been challenged by T. Wasserman, “The ‘Son of God’ Was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1),” *JTS* 62 (2011): 20-51.

⁸ For an argument that Lord is an important designation of Jesus in Mark, see D. Johansson, “Kyrios in the Gospel of Mark,” *JSNT* 33 (2010): 101-24.

⁹ Taylor, *Mark*, 152; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:76; Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:43; Stein, *Mark*, 41. At the time of Mark’s writing “Christ” was used as a name. On the Pauline evidence, see M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1983), 65-77.

¹⁰ J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

¹¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 34. See also A. Yarbro Collins, “Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans,” *HTR* 93 (2000): 85-100; C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary: Vol. 1* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 291-94; Evans, *Mark*, lxxxii-lxxxiii, on the use of this title for Roman emperors.

¹² Cf. e.g., E. K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116-20. On Qumran, see, however, the cautious comments by Marcus, *Way*, 78.

these titles.¹³ Already the next couple of clauses give, however, a strong indication of the meaning Mark attaches to the latter of these.

Verse 2 introduces a citation from the OT, ascribed to Isaiah, but which appears to come from three different passages: Exod 23:20; Mal 3:1; and Isa 40:3.¹⁴ In the first of these, God addresses Israel and promises to send his angel before them. This text is conflated with Mal 3:1 where YHWH through the prophet promises to send a messenger or an angel before himself: “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.” In Mark, however, “the way before me” becomes “your way.” The next verse cites LXX Isa 40:3 verbatim except for that “paths of our God” in the LXX is changed into “his paths”.¹⁵ In its original context the text refers to a manifestation of YHWH, resulting in salvation for God’s people.¹⁶

It is quite clear from Mark’s identification of Isaiah as the source of the citation, that he sees the Isaiah text as the most important one in this context. As for the conflation in 1:2, Watts argues convincingly that Mal 3:1 takes precedence over Exod 23:20.¹⁷ Not only does the Malachi text address a similar situation as Isa 40:3,¹⁸ focusing on the event the messenger prepares, the messenger is also identified as Elijah in Malachi (4:5) and Mark makes clear that John the Baptist fulfills the promise of his coming (cf. Mark 1:6 with 2 Kgs 1:8; Mark 9:12-13).¹⁹ Accordingly,

¹³ Ehrman is right that “Mark does not indicate *explicitly* what he means by calling Jesus ‘Son of God’” (“Text,” 152, italics mine), but that does *not* mean that Mark did not at all indicate how he understood the title.

¹⁴ For a detailed study, see esp. Marcus, *Way*, 12-18; Watts, *New Exodus*, 57-90; idem, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 113-20 and among older studies, K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew, and its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1954), 47-54; R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 9-12.

¹⁵ There are no LXX manuscripts attesting the reading “his paths.” MS D of Mark 1:3 has “paths of your God” whereas the old Latin MSS and several church fathers attest the LXX reading.

¹⁶ See C. J. Davis, *The Name and the Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 129; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 61-72.

¹⁷ Watts, *New Exodus*, 86-87.

¹⁸ Mark is probably responsible for the linking of Isa 40:3 with the conflation of Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1. See Marcus, *Way*, 15-17.

¹⁹ There is some difficulty to identify the three figures mentioned in Mal 3:1: my messenger, the Lord, and the messenger of the covenant (see A. E. Hill, *Malachi* [AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998], 265-71, 286-89; Watts, *New Exodus*, 67-71; idem, “Mark,” 117). The *Lord* [MT: יְהוָה] must be God himself since he is coming to *his* temple and because of the use of the definite article which always refers to YHWH (Hill, *Malachi*, 268). The first *messenger* is obviously the figure who will prepare way for YHWH’s coming and who is later identified as Elijah (4:5; Hill, *Malachi*, 383). But who is the messenger of the covenant who also will come? Is he one and the same as the first messenger or is he the messenger/angel of YHWH and thus somehow to be identified with YHWH himself? Is the parallel between the Lord’s coming and the messenger of the covenant’s coming referring to a single

the original contexts of both verses refer to the preparation of a way before the God of Israel. In Malachi, a promised messenger prepares the way of YHWH; in Isaiah a voice cries out to prepare the way of YHWH. What are we to make of this?

Clearly this is much more than merely an introduction of John the Baptist and his position vis-à-vis Jesus or Mark's way of saying that John appeared in the wilderness.²⁰ There is no doubt that Mark identifies the messenger and voice of the wilderness with John the Baptist.²¹ He is wearing clothes like Elijah's (1:6; cf. 2 Kgs 1:8); he prepares the people for the coming Lord by "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1:4; cf. Mal 3:2-4; 4:5-6); he proclaims the one who will come *after* him (1:7-8). There is less agreement, however, when it comes to the question of the identity of the coming one and the referent of the κύριος in 1:3, in particular. Some scholars state that it refers to God in distinction from Jesus. For example, Lührmann: "Der κύριος, dessen Weg es zu bereiten gilt, ist auch bei Mk noch Gott selbst im Unterschied zu dem in 2 angesprochenen Sohn."²² The large majority of scholars, however, argue that Jesus must be in view, often pointing to the alteration from τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν in the LXX to αὐτοῦ in Mark.²³ The view of Kingsbury is representative: "Mark quotes the OT passages that lie behind 1:2-3 in such a form and context that the four genitives of the pronouns 'you' and 'he' and the noun 'Lord' refer exclusively to 'Jesus Messiah, the Son of God' and not as

event, the latter clarifying in which form YHWH will come, or are we to see the parallel as correlating two separate events (a: my messenger [v. 1a]; b: YHWH [v. 1b]; a¹: the messenger's preparation [vv. 1c-4]; b¹: YHWH's coming [v. 5])? In his article on Mark's use of the OT, Watts takes the latter position ("Mark," 117), apparently having changed his view (cf. *New Exodus*, 70). For the present discussion nothing depends on the identification of this figure. It is beyond doubt that the first messenger heralds the coming of YHWH, whether this is clarified as the coming of the angel of YHWH or not.

²⁰ Contra e.g., Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 9; Nineham, *Mark*, 57. Cf. Marcus, *Way*, 22.

²¹ Contra M. A. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 239-48, who states that Jesus rather than John prepares the way. On John as Elijah, see M. Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des alttestamentlichen Propheten im Neuen Testament* (BZNW 88; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 31-37.

²² Lührmann, *Markus*, 34. Similarly, K. R. Snodgrass, "Streams of Tradition Emerging from Isaiah 40:1-5 and Their Adaptation in the New Testament," *JSNT* 8 (1980): 24-45, 34; Broadhead, *Naming*, 138. Marcus (*Way*, 38-39) also takes 1:2 as referring to Jesus and 1:3 to God, but he nevertheless finds a close connection between Jesus and God. According to Marcus, Mark draws back from identifying Jesus with the κύριος, yet the juxtaposition of "your [Jesus'] way" and "the way of the Lord" suggests a "recognition of the separateness of the two figures with a recognition of their inseparability."

²³ E.g., Lagrange, *Marc*, 4; Stendahl, *School*, 48; Cranfield, *Mark*, 39-40; Gundry, *Use*, 10; Lane, *Mark*, 46; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:77; Hooker, *Mark*, 35; Guelich, *Mark*, 11; France, *Mark*, 64; Boring, *Mark*, 36-37; Collins, *Mark*, 137. It should be noted that the alteration does not solve the question of who the κύριος is since the referent of αὐτοῦ is in itself unclear and depends upon the referent of κύριος.

originally to ‘God’.”²⁴ None of these positions does full justice to Mark, however. Contrary to the view that κύριος refers only to God, the context strongly supports an identification with Jesus. The voice, that is, John, who cries out “prepare the way of the Lord,” is preparing way for Jesus. This is made clear in 1:9, when Jesus appears on the scene.²⁵ But to state that κύριος *only* refers to Jesus is not fully correct either. This misses the significance of the fact that biblical texts, which in their original contexts refer to YHWH, are applied to Jesus. It is not a matter of either/or here, but both/and; both God and Jesus are in view.²⁶ The promises of God’s own coming in Mal 3:1²⁷ and Isa 40:3²⁸ are now being fulfilled in Jesus, or as Watts puts it,

The application of these texts to Jesus suggests that he is to be identified in some way, not so much with ‘the Messiah’, but with none

²⁴ J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 59 (my emphasis); similarly Stendahl, *School*, 48: “Here as in so many other cases the LXX’s κύριος is not the M.T.’s Yahweh but Christ”; J. Schreiber, *Die Markuspasion: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (2nd ed.; BZNW 68; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 239, n. 172: “In 1,3 wird also nicht Gott [...] sondern der von Gott gesandte Erlöser als Kyrios bezeichnet.”

²⁵ See e.g., Gundry, *Mark*, 36; Collins, *Mark*, 137.

²⁶ So also Klauck, *Vorspiel*, 87; see also Johansson, “Kyrios,” 103-05.

²⁷ Contrary to the view of some scholars (e.g., G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim: Vol. 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 357-60; Cranfield, *Mark*, 39; J. Jeremias “Ἠλ(ε)ίας,” *TDNT* 2:931; D. C. Allison, “Elijah Must Come First,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 256-58; Marcus, *Way*, 110; Watts, *New Exodus*, 75-76), there is no pre-Christian evidence that Elijah would be a forerunner of the Messiah (J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM, 1962), 35-37; M. M. Faierstein, “Why Do the Scribes Say that Elijah Must Come First,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 75-86; J. A. Fitzmyer, “More about Elijah Coming First,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 295-96; J. J. Collins, “The Works of the Messiah,” *DSD* 1 (1994): 98-112, 103-4; M. Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 461-76, 461-64). Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 49:1) alludes to the idea, but the earliest rabbinic attestation is found in *b. Erub.* 43a-b, which dates, at the earliest, from the third century (Öhler, “Expectation,” 463). Öhler is probably correct that this connection between Elijah and the Messiah is “an attempt by rabbinic writers to weld different eschatological views into one system” (“Expectation,” 464). Öhler’s conclusion that the function of Elijah in the early Christian writings was different from the one attributed to Elijah in Mal 4:5-6 and Sir 48:10, i.e., that Elijah was a forerunner of God, is questionable, however (468). Rather than modifying the Jewish expectation, early Christians probably identified the coming of Jesus with the coming of God. On the Jewish Elijah expectations, cf. also Str-B 4:779-798.

²⁸ In his survey of the use of Isa 40:3 in pre- and post-Christian Judaism, Davis concludes that there was a strong expectation of the coming of God himself, but also that some texts envision the coming of another figure, whose identity often is unclear, though Davis mentions the archangel Michael, the Son of Man, and the Messiah (*Name*, 72-87, 101). At a closer examination, however, it appears that none of the examples he refers to actually cite Isa 40:3 and it is highly questionable that they at all allude to the passage. Some of the passages (including some of those referring to God) seem to describe general theophanic phenomena, rather than specifically alluding to Isa 40:3 (e.g., 2 Macc 2:6-8; *T. Mos.* 10:4; *I En.* 1:6, which by implication excludes *I En.* 52:6-9; on the last text, see Bauckham, *Jesus*, 228-31 and the discussion in 8.4). I also find the attempt to link 11QMelch 2:15-16, 24-25 to Isa 40:3 highly speculative. Where there is undeniable use of Isa 40:3 in the Qumran literature, it refers to the eschatological coming of God (e.g., 1QS 8:12-16; 9:17-20; cf. 4:16-23), although the community may have expected the coming of other figures as part of the preparations for God’s definitive visitation (Davis, *Name*, 79).

other than the מלאך חבֿרִית and הָאֱלֹהִים of Malachi, and, in terms of Isaiah 40:3, the presence of Yahweh himself.²⁹

Several implications follow from this: 1) Mark begins the Gospel by citing the OT and provides thereby the audience with a framework for the story: it is clearly set against the background of a Jewish worldview in contrast to the Greco-Roman.³⁰ This means, among other things, that the belief in one God who is the sole Creator of all things and the sole sovereign Lord of all things³¹ is maintained. This is made explicit later in the Gospel (12:29-33), but also implied by the Isaiah reference and the citation of Isa 40:3, which introduces what is probably the most monotheistic section (Isa 40-66) of the Jewish Scripture.

2) By applying two OT YHWH texts to Jesus, Mark links Jesus in the closest possible way to the God of Israel.³² Horbury has suggested that this early Christian phenomenon³³ has an antecedent in Jewish messianism.³⁴ He points to two passages in the early Jewish literature in which OT passages with YHWH as subject are applied to a messianic figure (*1 En.* 52:6; *4 Ezra* 13:3-4). I will discuss these in greater detail below.³⁵ For now it is sufficient to note that Mark's use of OT texts in 1:2-3 clearly goes beyond the examples Horbury cites in two ways: First, unlike in Mark they are *not* introduced by a citation formula. Both *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* use language from biblical theophany passages (Pss 97:5; 104:32; Mic 1:3-4) to describe a reaction to the presence of the messianic agent. Second, neither of the passages includes the divine name YHWH or any of its substitutes and applies this to the messianic figure. Thus, whereas these passages merely utilize images and language which the biblical literature uses for YHWH, Mark explicitly cites passages about

²⁹ Watts, *New Exodus*, 87.

³⁰ On the Jewish worldview, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God: Vol. 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 38-44, 215-79.

³¹ I borrow this phrase from Bauckham. On the problems of Jewish monotheism in the first century, see e.g., L. W. Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3-26; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 60-106.

³² Contra e.g., Kingsbury, *Christology*, 110-11, it does not merely point to Jesus as Messiah.

³³ The application of texts which, in their original context, have YHWH as their subject to Jesus is a widespread phenomenon in the NT. Two lists of these texts (one for the Pauline literature and one for the rest of the NT) have been assembled and classified by Bauckham in *Jesus*, 186-88, 219-21. On this phenomenon in Paul, see D. B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology* (WUNT 2:47; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992; G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007); Bauckham, *Jesus*, 182-232.

³⁴ W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 103-04.

³⁵ See 8.4. See also Bauckham, *Jesus*, 229-32.

YHWH with reference to Jesus, seeing the fulfilment of these in Jesus and applying the divine name to Jesus.³⁶ The application of the κύριος of Isa 40:3 to Jesus, in particular, suggests more than a mere functional overlap between Jesus and God. In a unique way, and unparalleled in the early Jewish literature, Mark associates Jesus with Israel's God and the presence of YHWH himself.³⁷

3) The fact that Mark's citation appears as a part of the opening sentence makes it programmatic not only for the prologue, but for the whole Gospel.³⁸ This suggests that Mark sees the events he relates as fulfilling the promises of a New Exodus in Isaiah in particular, as Watts has shown.³⁹ But the opening sentence is also crucial for Mark's understanding of Jesus' identity. As a part of the heading, the identification of Jesus with the κύριος in Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1 provides the reader with a hermeneutical key to the christology of Mark.⁴⁰

³⁶ For evidence that Mark knew and utilized his knowledge of Hebrew when compiling his introductory citation, see Marcus, *Way*, 16. It is thus unlikely that Mark did not know that κύριος substitutes the divine name YHWH. Cf. E. E. Ellis, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (NovTSup 97; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 50: "Mark is fully aware that the Hebrew text refers to the coming of Yahweh as Israel's redeemer (Isa 40:3) and judge (Mal 3:1), and in that awareness he expounds them to make an identification *cum* distinction of Yahweh with Jesus Christ the Son of God." Of course, even those without knowledge in Hebrew would understand that the κύριος in Isa 40:3 is God. Even if Greek-speaking Christians did not have a text in which the divine name was indicated in a special way, it is probable that they in most cases would be able to recognize when κύριος renders the divine name, since it usually was differentiated from other uses of κύριος by its lack of article. See Davis, *Name*, 90-93; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 190. On the complicated question of when and how the divine name was rendered in the LXX, see A. Pietersma, "Kyrios or Tetragram: A Renewed Quest for the Original LXX," in *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (ed. A. Pietersma and C. Cox; Mississauga, Ont: Benben Publications, 1984), 85-101; M. Rösel, "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 411-28. For a general overview of the use of κύριος for God and the christological issues, see Capes, *Yahweh Texts*, 9-42.

³⁷ The application of the title God (*ʾēlōhīm*) in Ps 82:1 to the heavenly being identified as Melchizedek in 11QMelch 2:10 is sometimes appealed to as a parallel (see e.g., Davis, *Name*, 38-47). But, as both Capes (*Yahweh Texts*, 167) and Bauckham (*Jesus*, 224) point out, it is one thing to use a divine term which in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 4:16; 7:1; 15:11; Pss 82:1, 6; 86:8; 97:7, 9) and also the Qumran literature (4Q491c fr. 1.11) is sometimes used for other beings than God; it is another to apply the unique name of Israel's God to a second figure (on YHWH as the personal name of God, see K. van der Toorn, "Yahweh," *DDD* 1711-30). Moreover, Bauckham is probably right that the Qumran writer distinguished between *ʾēl* in Ps 82:1 which he took to be a reference to YHWH and *ʾēlōhīm* which he understood as Melchizedek (*Jesus*, 222-23).

³⁸ Watts, *New Exodus*, 56.

³⁹ But, of course, also other OT promises. For example, Jesus' coming to the temple (Mark 11:11) should probably be seen as the promise of God's own coming in Mal 3:1. See e.g., Hooker, *Mark*, 258; Schreiber, *Markuspassion*, 239; Watts, *New Exodus*, 310, 315-316; Boring, *Mark*, 313.

⁴⁰ The citation of Isa 40:3 in the other Gospels (Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23) occurs at far less strategic places. Therefore, I cannot agree with Davis that Mark "is the least clear how Jesus' coming relates to the coming of God" (*Name*, 99-100).

2.3. Jesus and YHWH in John the Baptist's Proclamation

There are essentially two elements in John the Baptist's teaching about the one who is going to come after him, both pointing to his own role as forerunner: his own complete unworthiness in comparison with the coming one and the prediction that this figure will baptize in a much more powerful way. We begin with the latter.

2.3.1. Baptizing with the Holy Spirit

John declares that the coming one will "baptize with the Holy Spirit" (1:8). This is generally understood as a reference to the OT promise of an eschatological outpouring of the Spirit of God.⁴¹ The use of the verb βαπτίζω is entirely appropriate since both in the OT and later Jewish literature the giving of the Spirit is associated with water or water metaphors.⁴² Throughout the OT, the giving of this gift is attributed to God alone, often emphatically by means of the phrase, "I will pour out/put my Spirit" (e.g., Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:29). A messianic agent can possess the Spirit (Isa 11:1-2; 61:1), but there is no evidence that he will

⁴¹ Cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 3:1-2 (2:28-29); Zech 12:10. A few scholars disagree, e.g., Gundry, *Mark*, 38-39, 45; Klauck, *Vorspiel*, 88-89. Both look for a fulfilment of the promise within Mark's narrative world and understand the promise as referring to Jesus' teaching and mighty acts, which depict Jesus as a *user* of the Spirit rather than a *giver* of it. Without denying that Spirit baptism may be foreshadowed both in Jesus' own ministry and the authority he bestows on his disciples (3:14-15; 6:7), there are no reasons to doubt that Mark directs the readers beyond the narrative and like other NT writers took this to be ultimately fulfilled only after the resurrection of Jesus. 1) This is only one of several promises which are left unfulfilled in Mark, including that the Holy Spirit will speak through the disciples (13:11; cf. Acts 4:6, 31; 5:32; etc.) and, even more significantly, that they shall meet and see the Risen One (14:28; 16:7). 2) Gundry claims that Mark shows no interest in Jesus' giving of the Spirit to the disciples since he does not make mention of it, but if Mark shares the view of Luke and John that it was only after the resurrection the Spirit would be bestowed, Mark cannot record it. In Luke (24:49) and John (20:22) this is further linked to resurrection appearances which are also lacking in Mark. 3) The promise in 13:11 assumes that the Spirit will be given to the disciples. In view of the negative portrayal of disciples, including their failure, particularly Peter's, at the arrest of Jesus they hardly possess this gift now. It is a promise for the future which assures their faithfulness during persecutions and ability to proclaim the Gospel (13:9-10; cf. Boring, *Mark*, 365-66). Thus, for Mark the promise of the Baptist is sufficient and needs no repetition (cf. also 13:10 which may assume a command like that in Matt 28:18-20, but which is nevertheless absent in Mark). 4) The juxtaposition of the promise of a Spirit baptism and Jesus' own baptism, which probably reminds the reader of his or her own baptism (on Jesus as an example for the disciple also in this regard, see P. G. Davis, "Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark," in *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Changing Horizons* [ed. D.J. Hawkin and T. Robinson; Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 26; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990], 101-19) may suggest how the promise will be fulfilled. Just as God gives Jesus the Spirit in his baptism, so Jesus will give the Spirit in Christian baptism (cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 38-39). See further M. D. Hooker, *The Message of Mark* (London: Epworth, 1983), 10; H. D. Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (SNTSMS 89; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 120-27, for convincing arguments that Spirit baptism is assumed in Mark.

⁴² Cf. the language of "pouring" (e.g., Isa 32:15; 44:3); the juxtaposition of sprinkling with water and the giving of the Spirit in Ezek 36:25-27; 1QS 4:18-23. Note also the association of the Holy Spirit with water in the NT (John 3:5; 7:37-39; Acts 2:33; 10:45; 1 Cor 12:13; Tit 3:5-6).

endow others with that gift. This view is also maintained throughout the early Jewish literature. The assertion by some scholars⁴³ that the giving of the Spirit had been attributed to the Messiah during the Second Temple period cannot be maintained.⁴⁴ Two passages from the *Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs* which sometimes are cited in support of such a view are probably Christian,⁴⁵ and even if they are not, they do not provide unambiguous evidence for a Messiah who confers the Spirit.⁴⁶ Likewise, Dunn's arguments for a Spirit-endowed Messiah who will bestow the Spirit by virtue of his own anointing in the Qumran writings are highly contentious and should be rejected.⁴⁷ Thus, as far as the texts which have come down to us go, only God was expected to pour out his Spirit on men and women in the last days. The role the Baptist attributes to the coming one is therefore one reserved for YHWH himself. Hence, by identifying Jesus with the coming one and attributing to him the eschatological giving of the God's Spirit, Mark depicts him in the first of many divine roles⁴⁸ and makes a very exalted christological claim for him.⁴⁹ As Turner

⁴³ Schniewind, *Markus*, 45; Cranfield, *Mark*, 50; J. D. G. Dunn, "Spirit-and-Fire Baptism," *NovT* 14 (1970): 81-92, 88-91, L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. J.E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:37 n. 21; Marcus, *Mark*, 152, arguing that "it would be a short step from a Spirit-endowed Messiah to a Spirit-endowing one."

⁴⁴ Lagrange, *Marc*, 8; Taylor, *Mark*, 157; M. M. B. Turner, "The Spirit of Christ and Christology," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (ed. H. H. Rowdon; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1982) 168-190, esp. 181-84; W. Schenk, "Gefangenschaft und Tod des Täufer: Erwägungen zur Chronologie und ihren Konsequenzen," *NTS* 29 (1983): 453-83, 476 n. 12; M.M.B. Turner, "The Spirit of Christ and 'Divine' Christology," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 413-36; and particularly the survey in M. Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Christ in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications* (WUNT 2:128; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000), 47-163.

⁴⁵ On the possible Christian origin of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, see H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 1-85; M. de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); on the passages under discussion, see idem, "Christian Influence in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *NovT* 4 (1960): 182-235, 200-208.

⁴⁶ In *T. Levi* 18:6-11 the giver of the Spirit is not identified, whereas the implied subject of the verb "pour" in *T. Jud.* 24:1-3 may be either God or the Messiah; see Fatehi, *Spirit*, 138-39.

⁴⁷ Dunn, "Spirit-and-Fire Baptism," 88-91; see the critique in Turner, "Christology," 182; Fatehi, *Spirit*, 80. Dunn himself seems now to have abandoned this view (see *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making* vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 221-22, where he states that this role was possible only for God).

⁴⁸ So e.g., Hooker, *Mark*, 38-39; France, *Mark*, 70; Edwards, *Mark*, 33; F. J. Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2004), 129.

⁴⁹ Turner has repeatedly argued that the early Christian experience of Christ's role in relation to the Spirit was the decisive impulse towards a divine christology (see "Christology" and "Divine Christology"). Whether this was the case or not, he has at least shown that this was a uniquely divine role which Christ very early on was believed to share. Along the same lines, Fatehi (*Spirit*, 321-22)

notes with regard to Acts 2:33: “The closest analogy in the Old Testament and Judaism to Jesus’ relationship to the Spirit [...] is not that of men anointed with God’s Spirit, but the Old Testament picture of God’s relationship to the Spirit.”⁵⁰

This role, however, is one which Jesus is not going to carry out in its fullest expression within the narrative of Mark, only after his resurrection and exaltation. This is confirmed in 13:11, the only other passage which speaks of the Holy Spirit’s activity in relation to the disciples. Jesus’ promise,⁵¹ that his followers do not need to be worried about what to say when they stand before Jewish or Gentile courts since the Holy Spirit will put words in their mouths,⁵² is not fulfilled within the narrative of Mark. Up to this point the disciples have been both unable to understand and inarticulate, and they will soon, especially Peter, deny their master.⁵³ Clearly, they need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit by Jesus in order to take the Gospel to all nations (13:10) and to not be ashamed of Jesus when put to trial (8:38).⁵⁴ Whether Mark thought the promise was fulfilled on Pentecost⁵⁵ or he had a more general experience of the divine Spirit in the early Christian movement in view⁵⁶ is not clear. Perhaps he thought of the baptism each individual believer had experienced, for which Jesus’ own baptism, which follows immediately after the Baptizer’s promise, was the prototype.⁵⁷ The precise reference is of less importance for the present study. What is important to note is that the Baptist’s words point to Jesus’ unique status as

concludes that the Pauline evidence in this regard amounts to more than sharing a divine function. He thinks Paul’s view assumes an “ontological” divinity. God may have shared some functions with a chief agent, but “it did not seem plausible for the Jews to think of God *delegating or sharing himself*..., as he was present and active through his Spirit.” In his discussion of Acts 2:33, Dunn also notes the astonishing claim which is made in Peter’s speech, a feature he thinks was “neither taken up nor developed further, at least until the Fourth Evangelist” (*Beginning*, 222). Although Dunn here discusses Acts 2:33 he connects this passage to Mark 1:8 elsewhere (91, n. 155).

⁵⁰ Turner, “Christology,” 183.

⁵¹ This promise in itself seems to imply that Jesus somehow is “in control” of the Spirit. In Luke’s version of this saying, Jesus promises that he *himself* will give them what to say (21:15).

⁵² Some commentators note the similarities between this saying and the Johannine concept of the *Paraclete* (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:8-11). See e.g., Grundmann, *Markus*, 264; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 404; France, *Mark*, 518. For a parallel in Paul, see Fatehi, *Spirit*, 221-27 on Phil 1:18-20.

⁵³ Boring, *Mark*, 365-66.

⁵⁴ Even Gundry who forcefully argues for a fulfilment of the Baptist’s words in Jesus’ ministry (see n. 41 above) thinks that 13:11 implies a “continuing fulfilment” of the prediction in 1:8 (*Mark*, 739).

⁵⁵ As in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 3:16; 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2; see also Buckwalter, *Luke’s Christology*, 128-37). This view is common among Markan scholars (see Buckwalter, *Luke’s Christology*, 126, n. 34).

⁵⁶ France, *Mark*, 72; Boring, *Mark*, 42-43.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, 48.

the one who will bestow the Spirit of God in the last days and thereby also to the Lordship he will exercise after his death and resurrection.⁵⁸

2.3.2. The Stronger One

The attribution of the giving of the Spirit to the coming one may indicate that John the Baptist saw himself as a herald of the God of Israel himself.⁵⁹ The objection is, however, often raised that this does not fit John's description of the coming one: "After me comes he [ἐρχεται]⁶⁰ who is mightier than I [ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου], the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie" (1:7). After all, God does not wear sandals and a human being would surely not compare himself to God.⁶¹

The untying of sandals may, however, not necessarily demand that a human being is in view. In fact, Abraham let the feet of YHWH be washed in Gen 18:4 (cf. 18:1).⁶² Anthropomorphic metaphors are often used for God in the OT and there are at least two passages which ascribe shoes metaphorically to God (Pss 60:8; 108:9).⁶³ Furthermore, since the task of untying sandals was regarded by the Jews as even too demeaning for a Hebrew slave,⁶⁴ it may only be John's way of metaphorically expressing his complete unworthiness in comparison with the one whose way he prepares.⁶⁵ This distance is, in fact, quite astonishing given that John is identified as the Elijah *redivivus* and the one who was given the extraordinary task of preparing the way of YHWH himself.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Buckwalter, *Luke's Christology*, 127; Marcus, *Mark*, 158.

⁵⁹ For a survey of the various figures the historical John may have expected, see R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 219-60; 282-88; Guelich, *Mark*, 22-24.

⁶⁰ The verb ἐρχεται most likely harks back both to Mal 3:1, where it is used to describe the coming of God, and to the coming of the κύριος of Isa 40:3, described in 40:10.

⁶¹ Guelich, *Mark*, 22; Webb, *John*, 284-86; Marcus, *Mark*, 151. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 369, says that "God is a possibility not to be lightly discarded," but raises the same objections.

⁶² Davis, *Name*, 98.

⁶³ J. H. Hughes, "John the Baptist: The Forerunner of God Himself," *NovT* 14 (1972): 191-218, 196; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 39.

⁶⁴ *Mek. Exod.* 21:2; cf. *b. Ketub.* 96a; *b. Qidd.* 22b.

⁶⁵ Cf. e.g., Schenk, "Gefangenschaft," 476, n. 13.

⁶⁶ Note that the author of the Gospel of John did not find the Baptist's statement (1:27) incompatible with his divine christology (1:1; 20:28). See Davis, *Name*, 98.

Given John's exalted role,⁶⁷ the designation ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου may neither be completely out of place with an expected coming of God, especially as this is qualified by the words about John's unworthiness immediately afterwards. In the LXX, God is designated as ὁ ἰσχυρός.⁶⁸ The present context seems, however, primarily to suggest an allusion to Isa 40:10: "Behold, YHWH comes with might [κύριος μετὰ ἰσχύος ἔρχεται], and his arm rules for him..."⁶⁹ The comparative probably, then, serves to stress John's preparatory role. But it also anticipates Jesus' role as "Yahweh-warrior,"⁷⁰ the one stronger than Satan, who is strikingly designated *the strong one* (ὁ ἰσχυρός) in 3:27. Just as YHWH is stronger than the strong man Babylon (Isa 49:24-25), so is Jesus stronger than Satan.⁷¹

Nothing, then, in the Baptist's speech in verse 7 seems to contradict the implication of the role he attributes to the coming one in verse 8; rather, it stresses John's absolute unworthiness in comparison with the one coming one.⁷² Hence, France rightly concludes,

It says a lot for the underlying christology of Mark's gospel that he can allow the Baptist's words, which in themselves point directly to the coming of God, to be read as referring to the human Jesus. For him, apparently, the coming of Jesus *is* the eschatological coming of God.⁷³

⁶⁷ John may even be interpreted as the angel of Exod 23:20. So at least J. Marcus, "Authority to Forgive Sins upon the Earth: The Shema in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner; JSNTSup, 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): 196-211, 208, n. 2.

⁶⁸ 2 Sam 22:31; 23:5; Ps 7:12; Isa 49:26; Jer 39:18; Dan 9:4.

⁶⁹ So e.g., Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 63.

⁷⁰ See Watts, *New Exodus*, 140-69.

⁷¹ So also Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 18. Gundry's objection that the non-comparative "the strong one" should have been used if a divine referent was in view falls in the light of Mark's use of this title for Satan (*Mark*, 45).

⁷² Cf. Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 18: "Vor ihm ‚beugt sich‘ der Tauffer wie vor Gott, weil oder trotzdem er die eschatologische ‚Stimme Gottes‘ ist."

⁷³ France, *Mark*, 70 (italics his); cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 39; Moloney, *Storyteller*, 129. Several exegetes think that the historical John saw himself as a forerunner of God, in much the same way as the Qumran community (e.g., Grundmann, *Markus*, 28; Hughes, "John the Baptist," passim; Öhler, "Expectation," 473). Is that the case, it does not necessarily imply that Mark and other early Christians, by identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of John's expectations, corrected John's view, but that they in fact believed that Jesus was YHWH in some sense.

2.4. Other Evidence in the Prologue

2.4.1. God's Beloved Son

While I do not find any evidence, which on its own would suggest a divine role for Jesus in the baptism account (1:9-11), there are nevertheless a couple of issues that need to be addressed: the meaning of the “Son of God” title, and the question of preexistence.

Scholars tend to detect numerous echoes of the OT in this passage.⁷⁴ With regard to the heavenly voice's declaration, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased,” it is commonly believed that this is a combination of texts from Ps 2:7, Isa 42:1, and perhaps also Gen 22:2, 12, and 16. This would, then, suggest that Jesus is presented as a kingly figure, the royal Messiah (Ps 2:7) and the chosen servant (Isa 42:1). While this interpretation no doubt forms a part of Mark's understanding of Jesus (cf. 1:1), there is probably more to the designation “beloved son,” however. As we noted earlier, members of Mark's Greco-Roman audience would probably understand the title “Son of God” as indicating Jesus' divinity. But Mark's initial OT citation has also identified Jesus with the *κύριος* of Isa 40:3 and placed him on the divine side of the God-creation divide. In this light, then, the present passage also clarifies the relationship between the God of Israel and the figure who is so closely associated with him. For, while Jesus is inseparably linked to YHWH, participating in “God's very power and being,”⁷⁵ he is at the same time distinguished from God. He is God's son. This, however, does not imply that Jesus is a second divine being alongside God, that is, a son of God in the non-Jewish Hellenistic sense. This would certainly compromise the belief in the *one* creator and Lord. Instead Jesus is *uniquely* included on the divine side of the reality, while relating to God as a son to a father.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ See e.g., Marcus, *Way*, 49-56.

⁷⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 72.

⁷⁶ Cf. Marcus, *Way*, 92: “The title ‘Son of God,’ therefore, is a perfect one for the Markan Jesus, since it bespeaks both the unique familial likeness to God and his subordination to the one whom he calls ‘Father’.” Cf. also the observation by P. Danove, “The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterisation of God,” *NovT* 43 (2001): 12-30, who, after having identified 17 points of information about God in Mark 1:1-15 which simultaneously give information about Jesus, concludes: “The direct or indirect insinuation of Jesus into every aspect of the characterization of God in 1:1-15 engenders an indelible bond between the characters, God and Jesus, that precludes any understanding of either character without immediate reference to the other” (26).

The second point has to do with the question of preexistence in Mark. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of this controversial issue,⁷⁷ but since this passage sometimes is adduced to refute the idea that Mark could have thought of Jesus as preexistent some comments are necessary. Collins, for example, argues that Mark's "portrayal of the baptism seems to indicate that Jesus was chosen as messiah on that occasion."⁷⁸ This is a conceivable reading were we to interpret 1:9-11 in isolation from the rest of Mark. But if we read it in the light of what has preceded in the prologue as well as the subsequent story this is hardly a convincing view. To begin with, when these words are repeated by God in 9:7 ("This is my beloved son") they cannot mean that Jesus is appointed as son; he is already. But then, can they imply an appointment in 1:11? Is it not more likely that they also here are a declaration of Jesus' identity, a view which seems to be supported by the stress Mark puts on *ού* by placing it first (contrast LXX Ps 2:7)?⁷⁹ Moreover, God's address of Jesus in 1:11 also points back to God's second person address of the *κύριος* in 1:2: "Behold, I send my messenger before *your* face." Whether this should be read as a heavenly scene in which God is addressing his preexistent son,⁸⁰ or merely as a testimony from the Scripture about the future, it is at least clear that Jesus is identified as *κύριος* before he appears on the scene and before God's declaration in 1:11. The audience has, as Boring puts it, already "overheard" God speaking to Jesus before 1:11;⁸¹ the relationship is already established. He is already *κύριος* and son. When and how Jesus becomes this, Mark does not tell.⁸² The Evangelist's interest

⁷⁷ On this question, see esp. Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, passim; A. Yarbro Collins, "Jesus as Messiah and Son of God in the Synoptic Gospels," in eadem and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 123-48, 123-26.

⁷⁸ Collins, "Messiah and Son of God," 131-32; see also 126-28. Cf. Klauck, *Vorspiel*, 100-03. For a critical assessment of this position, see L. Schenke, "Gibt es im Markusevangelium eine Präexistenzchristologie?" *ZNW* 91 (2000), 45-71, 53-56.

⁷⁹ Cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 48; Schenke, "Gibt es," 55; Boring, *Mark*, 46; France, *Mark*, 82.

⁸⁰ This interpretation goes back at least to A. Schlatter, *Markus: Der Evangelist für die Griechen* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935), 15. He is followed by e.g., Schniewind, *Markus*, 44; O. Hofius, "Jesu Zuspruch der Sündenvergebung: Exegetische Erwägungen zu Mk 2,5 b," in idem, *Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT 132; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000), 38-56, 55; Schenke, "Gibt es," 57. A similar view is adopted by Boring, *Mark*, 36, who characterizes 1:2-3 as "an offstage scene not located in space and time." On this interpretation, see also Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 250-52.

⁸¹ Boring, *Mark*, 36; cf. Boring, "Beginning," 64.

⁸² Cf. Ehrman, "Text," 152.

seems to lie with “the way” of the earthly Jesus rather than with questions regarding his pre- and postexistence.⁸³

2.4.2. Jesus with the Wild Beasts

Mark’s version of the temptation story (1:13) and the reference to Jesus being with the wild animals, in particular, is a *crux interpretum*. Some interpreters understand the wild beasts as allies of Satan, joining him in his battle against Jesus, who, in turn, is supported by the angels.⁸⁴ A second view argues that the animals are on Jesus’ side and that Jesus is presented as a new Adam in peaceful coexistence with them.⁸⁵ A third position, likewise, takes Jesus to be in harmony with the beasts, but prefers to see him as the Messiah who establishes peace with the animals (Isa 11:6-9).⁸⁶ The advantage of this view is that it can be linked with the baptism where Jesus is anointed with the Spirit (Isa 11:2). But there is also a fourth possibility, which would portray Jesus in a divine role and also hark back to the opening citation of Isa 40:3.⁸⁷ In 43:20, YHWH declares through the prophet: “The wild beasts will honor me [εὐλογῇσιν με τὰ θηρία].” These words are preceded by a statement that YHWH will make a way in the wilderness (43:19), a direct allusion to Isa 40:3. In this case, the animals are aligned with the angels in their honoring service of Jesus. This may, then, be Mark’s way of saying that the wild beasts recognize Jesus’ true identity, just as the demons will do later in the narrative (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). If this is correct, then Jesus is not so much a Davidic Messiah who restores peace in the creation, which Isa 11:6-9, in fact, does not state that the messianic figure will do, but acting in the capacity of the creator himself.⁸⁸ Given Mark’s vague description, however, it is very

⁸³ Cf. Schenke, “Gibt es,” 57, n. 50, who notes that it is only through the *words* of the angels that the audience knows of the resurrection and the events to follow (16:6-7); the risen one is never seen by the disciples in Mark’s narrative. The reason for that Mark restricts his story to Jesus’ earthly life may be that the Evangelist also wishes to portray Jesus as the ideal disciple, whose example is to be followed (see Davis, “Discipleship,” *passim*). The Gospel of Mark does not tell whether its author has a developed doctrine of preexistence or not. It may be presupposed (so Schenke, “Gibt es,” *passim*). In any case, it certainly says too little about the christology of Mark if it is characterized as adoptionistic (so e.g., Boring, “Beginning,” 64; Klauck, *Vorspiel*, 110).

⁸⁴ Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 27-28; France, *Mark*, 86-87.

⁸⁵ Gnailka, *Markus*, 1:58; Guelich, *Mark*, 39.

⁸⁶ R. Bauckham, “Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3-21.

⁸⁷ C. A. Gieschen, “Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13)?,” *CTQ* 73 (2009): 77-80. Watts mentions this possibility in passing (*New Exodus*, 118).

⁸⁸ Moloney, “Storyteller,” 129.

difficult to judge what the Evangelist intended by the inclusion of the reference to the θηρία.⁸⁹

2.5. Conclusion

The prologue of Mark gives evidence of a remarkably close association of Jesus with Israel's God. In the very first sentence of the Gospel, Mark cites two OT texts with YHWH as subject but with reference to Jesus. In the more important one of these, Isa 40:3, the substitution of the divine name, κύριος, is applied to Jesus. Given the importance that was attached to story beginnings in Antiquity this is not a mere casual instance of a widespread phenomenon in early Christian writings; it defines who Jesus is throughout the Gospel. The prologue adds further support for this view when John the Baptist's words about the coming one, which in themselves point to God's own coming, in Mark's narrative refers to Jesus. In this light, then, the identification of Jesus as *the* beloved Son of God implies both Jesus' close and inseparable linking with God and his distinction from God. Therefore, when it comes to the heart of the matter, that is, Jesus' relationship to God, Mark's prologue may not be so far behind the Johannine (1:1-18) as is often assumed. The major difference is the way the Evangelists choose to communicate their respective understandings of Jesus. Where John prefers the *logos* concept and incarnation language, Mark is more implicit, uses the Scripture, and applies texts about the one God of Israel to Jesus, and attributes to him the fulfillment of the promises of an eschatological giving of God's Spirit. In fact, Mark's application of God's personal name YHWH to Jesus may not be less remarkable than John's statement that "the Word was God".⁹⁰

The rest of this study will show if this interpretation of Mark's opening sentence and the prologue is correct and can be sustained in Mark's subsequent story of Jesus. To this we now turn.

⁸⁹ It has even been suggested that an allusion to the wild beasts in Rome is in view (Edwards, *Mark*, 41-42).

⁹⁰ Capes makes a similar observation when comparing Paul's use of OT YHWH texts for Jesus with John's christology (*Yahweh Texts*, 181-82).

3. Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sins

3.1. Introduction

Jesus' act of forgiving the paralytic's sins (Mark 2:1-12) has often been referred to as evidence of a high christology in the scholarly discussion of Mark. This insight is not new. The passage was used in the early Church to substantiate the claim that Jesus was truly divine. Thus, for example, Novatian put this passage alongside statements chiefly from the Gospel of John to demonstrate the deity of Christ:

Moreover, if, whereas it is the property of none but God to know the secrets of the heart, Christ beholds the secrets of the heart; and if, whereas it belongs to none but God to remit sins, the same Christ remits sins; [...], reasonably Christ is God.¹

Not all scholars, however, agree that Jesus here acts in a uniquely divine role. On the one hand, there are those who think it is God rather than Jesus who forgives the sins of the paralytic; Jesus merely announces God's forgiveness. On the other hand, it has been proposed that the Judaism(s) of the Second Temple period actually knew of other figures than God who forgave sins.

We shall begin by looking at what Mark himself has to say on the issue. Since there is sometimes a confusion of what may or may not have taken place in the ministry of the historical Jesus with the Markan text in discussions of the present pericope, it is necessary to remind ourselves that our concern is with the final text of Mark. What kind of claim does *that* make about Jesus? We then turn to evidence that has been put forward to demonstrate that other figures than God forgave sins. Are there any exceptions to the Scribes' dictum that only God can forgive sins? Finally, we look at various other features of the passage which provide additional evidence of Jesus acting in capacities reserved for Israel's God.

3.2. Does Jesus Forgive the Paralytic's Sins?

A paralytic is brought to Jesus, but in contrast to other healing stories in Mark, Jesus does not immediately heal the man. Instead he announces the forgiveness of the

¹ Novatian, *De Trinitate* 13 (ANF 5:622-23). The combination of knowledge of men's hearts and forgiving of sins shows that Mark 2:1-12 with parallels must be in view. See also e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.17 (ANF 1:545); Hippolytus, *Exposition of the Second Psalm* (ANF 5:170).

man's sins: τέκνον, ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι: "Child, your sins are forgiven" (2:5b).

Who is the subject of the forgiveness announced to the man? Is forgiveness predicated to God and is Jesus therefore announcing God's forgiveness of the man's sins? Or does Jesus personally forgive the sins of the man so that his words are to be taken as a performative utterance accomplishing what they say? Several scholars understand the passive verb form² as a *passivum divinum* with God as the implied agent.³ According to this interpretation the intention of Jesus' words is, "My son, God forgives your sins."⁴ In this case God alone would forgive the sins and Jesus would merely be mediating this forgiveness to the sinner. The use of the divine passive is well attested in the Gospels,⁵ so it is without doubt a possible interpretation, but it is not the *only* possible interpretation. The words may equally well refer to Jesus himself.

Hofius has gathered together a number of Hebrew and Aramaic texts in which forgiveness is offered with a similar formula and with clear reference to the speaker.⁶ He cites four texts in which a human being forgives another using the passive. For example, Midrash Tanchuma, in a dialogue between Moses and the Israelites, has them asking each other for forgiveness shortly before Moses' death. On Moses' request for forgiveness, the people answer: "Our teacher, our lord, you are forgiven [מַחֲוֹל לְךָ]" and Moses similarly forgives the people: "You are forgiven [מַחֲוֹל לָכֶם]." It is obvious that these usages of the passive express the same meaning as an active statement. The sins are forgiven in the moment of the pronouncement. More importantly, there are also texts in which God forgives human beings (esp. David) using the passive. Hofius cites five Hebrew and Aramaic texts,

² The attestation of ἀφέωνται in several MSS (Σ, A, C, D, L. etc.) is probably due to influence from the parallel in Luke 5:20. See H.-J. Klauck, "Die Frage der Sündenvergebung in der Perikope von der Heilung des Gelähmten (Mk 2,1-12 parr)," *BZ* 25 (1981): 223-48, 241.

³ J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (9th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 122, n. 4; 206, n. 8; idem, *Neutestamentliche Theologie* (2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973), 116; Grundmann, *Markus*, 76; Anderson, *Mark*, 100; Lane, *Mark*, 94, n. 9; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:156; J. Gnllka, "Das Elend vor dem Menschensohn (Mk 2, 1-12)," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn* (ed. R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg; Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 196-209, 202; Guelich, *Mark*, 85-86, 93; Moloney, *Mark*, 61; Boring, *Mark*, 76.

⁴ Jeremias, *Gleichnisse*, 206, n. 8: "Mein Sohn, Gott vergibt Dir Deine Sünden."

⁵ Jeremias, *Theologie*, 20-22.

⁶ O. Hofius, "Jesu Zuspruch der Sündenvergebung: Exegetische Erwägungen zu Mk 2,5 b," in idem, *Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT 132; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2000), 38-56, esp. 50-52.

among them *b. Šabb.* 30a where David asks for forgiveness and YHWH responds: “You are forgiven [ךָ מְחול לְ].”⁷ Hofius concludes on basis of these texts that “[d]ie hebräischen und aramäischen Wendungen zeigen ja zur Genüge, dass es sich bei der passivischen Redeweise offensichtlich um ein im alttestamentlich-jüdischen Sprachbereich geläufiges Idiom handelt.”⁸ A conclusive decision on the subject of the verb on the basis of the verb form is thus not possible, since the passive form is *ambiguous* and open to interpretation.⁹

This ambiguity is, however, quickly resolved when we turn to the immediate context. How Jesus’ declaration should be understood is first indicated by the reaction of the scribes who are present: “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins except one, God? [τίς δύναται ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός;].” It is clear that the scribes understand Jesus as himself forgiving the paralytic. In their view, Jesus commits the worst sin possible against God – blasphemy – by infringing on the divine prerogative to forgive sins.¹⁰ Whether the view attributed to the scribes adequately reflects the belief of early Judaism will be considered below. The point is here that the Markan narrative makes clear how Jesus’ words are understood by those present in the story and how they should be understood by the readers; Jesus himself forgives the paralytic. There can be no doubt that the Evangelist agrees with the scribes on this matter.¹¹ If they were mistaken one would expect Jesus to point out that they have misunderstood him. But no attempt is made to correct them. On the contrary, their view is confirmed by Jesus himself in the following verses.

Despite this clear attribution of the forgiveness to Jesus, some scholars nevertheless ascribe to Jesus a prophetic authority and find an analogy in Nathan’s announcement of YHWH’s forgiveness to the penitent David in 2 Sam 12:13.¹² Such an explanation may be possible in a hypothetical reconstruction of what supposedly

⁷ See further *‘Abot R. Nat.* 9:2; *Midr. Ps.* 19 of Ps 19:13; *Rab. Lev.* 5:8; *b. Sanh.* 107a. Cf. Str-B 2:585.

⁸ Hofius, “Zuspruch,” 52.

⁹ Thus even if one posits a pre-history of the pericope in which 2:5 was separated from 2:6-10, as many scholars do, the forgiveness may not necessarily be ascribed to God.

¹⁰ See the discussion below.

¹¹ E.g., Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 95.

¹² Cf. e.g., J. C. O’Neill, “The Charge of Blasphemy at Jesus’ Trial before the Sanhedrin,” in *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule* (ed. E. Bammel; London: SCM, 1979), 72-77; Lane, *Mark*, 95-96.

took place in the ministry of Jesus, but in Mark's story there is no hint of this. The scribes do not object to prophetic activity.¹³ If they suspected a pretension to a prophetic office on the part of Jesus, and if this was the Evangelist's intention, he should have had the scribes ask if Jesus was a *prophet*, legitimized to speak in the name of YHWH. But their problem is not Jesus' prophetic authority; their concern is that Jesus acts like God himself by personally forgiving the paralytic his sins.

A second indication that Jesus himself forgives the man comes in 2:10. In a direct answer to the accusation of the scribes Jesus claims that the Son of Man "has authority to forgive sins on earth."¹⁴ These words cannot imply that Jesus is given an authority to merely offer God's forgiveness. They ascribe to Jesus himself power to forgive sins in an absolute sense. This is clear from the close parallel between Jesus' saying and the accusation of the scribes. Hofius has rightly pointed out that 2:10 (ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας) corresponds to 2:7 (δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας) in both form and content and that δύναται and ἐξουσίαν ἔχει are virtual synonyms.¹⁵ What Jesus says should thus not be read primarily against the background of Dan 7:13.¹⁶ The Markan Jesus does not claim that he has been given authority (cf. Matt 28:18) to forgive sins, but that he, as does God, has this authority.¹⁷ Some scholars nevertheless argue that the expression "on earth" implies a contrast between what God is doing in heaven and what the Son of Man does on earth.¹⁸ Several things militate against this interpretation, however. First, if Mark

¹³ Cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 214, who suggests that the charge of blasphemy arose from the scribes' "knowledge" that Jesus was not a prophet and therefore did not have authority to pronounce God's forgiveness.

¹⁴ I. Maisch, *Die Heilung des Gelähmten* (Stuttgart: Katolisches Bibelwerk, 1971), 79-81.

¹⁵ Hofius, "Zuspruch," 41-2.

¹⁶ Contra e.g., Marcus, *Mark*, 222-23. If there is Danielic influence on 2:10 it would seem to come from chapter 4 which uses identical phrases to describe *God's* authority over everything in heaven and on earth (LXX Dan 4:17; 27; 31). See J. Kiilunen, *Die Vollmacht in Widerstreit: Untersuchungen zum Werdegang von Mk 2,1-3,6* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1985), 118-19; A. Feuillet, "L'EXΟΥΣΙΑ du Fils de l'homme (d'après Mc. II,10-28 et parr.)," *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1954): 161-92. Gnilya notes correctly that the Son of Man never is ascribed authority to forgive sins in the Jewish apocalyptic literature (*Markus*, 1:101). Neither can there be a question of influence from traditions connected with Hellenistic divine men (so e.g., Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 158). Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 139 n. 208, could find no examples of a miracle-working divine man with authority to forgive sin.

¹⁷ Cf. Hofius, "Zuspruch," 42: "Nicht von der *abgeleiteten* Vollmacht eines 'Gesandten' Gottes ist in V. 10 die Rede, sondern von der *unmittelbaren* Vollmacht Gottes selbst, die als solche die Vollmacht des Menschensohnes ist" (italics Hofius). Contra J.-J. Marin, *The Christology of Mark: Does Mark's Christology Support the Chalcedonian Formula "Truly Man and Truly God"?* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991), 186-89.

¹⁸ E.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 1:160-61; Marcus, *Mark*, 222-23: "For Mark, the heavenly God remains the ultimate forgiver, but at the climax of history he has delegated his power of absolution to a 'Son of

intended a heaven-earth antithesis he could easily have added “in heaven” to God in 2:7. The explicit contrast of human doing on earth and God’s doing in heaven in Matt 16:19 and 18:18 should not be read into this passage. Second, “on earth” does not necessarily imply human activity in contrast to God’s, as if God could not act directly on earth. The OT can speak explicitly of God’s own saving work *on earth*.¹⁹ Furthermore, there are a number of striking similarities between 2:10 and the language used to describe God’s sovereignty in LXX Daniel 4, including the phrases ἐξουσίαν ἔχει and ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (cf. vv. 17, 27, 31). So far from limiting Jesus’ authority to forgive on earth in distinction from God’s authority in heaven, these words ascribe to Jesus what is ascribed to God in the OT. Jesus’ response in 2:10, then, does not negate the view of the Jewish scholars, nor does it provide an exception.²⁰ What is said of God in 2:7 is said of the Son of Man/Jesus in 2:10. Mark maintains both: God alone has the authority to forgive sins; Jesus has authority to forgive sins. The Evangelist, thereby, places Jesus on the divine side of the God-creation divide.

That Jesus himself forgives the sins of the paralytic is finally also confirmed by the close parallel between by Jesus’ act of forgiving and his act of healing. These acts are juxtaposed in 2:9 where Jesus asks the scribes: “Which is easier, to *say* to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to *say*, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?” Whether Jesus’ question functions as a *qal wahomer* argument, from the greater to the lesser, serving to prove that by healing the paralytic he demonstrates his power to forgive,²¹ or it is rhetorical and implying that both are impossible for human beings²² does not matter. The point is that both forgiveness and healing are ascribed to a word

Man’ who carries out his gracious will in the earthly sphere.” Maisch, *Heilung*, 102-3, rightly notes that the phrase does not put a limit to the authority of Jesus, but rather underlines it. Similarly France, *Mark*, 129, who states that the phrase serves to underline that forgiveness, hitherto thought to be an exclusively heavenly function, is now exercised on earth.

¹⁹ Hofius, “Zuspruch,” 42. For example, Ps 58:11: “... there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges *on earth*”; Ps 74:12: “God ... is working salvation *in the midst of the earth*”; Dan 6:27: “He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and *on earth*.” Cf. also 2 Macc 15:5, which in its context stresses God’s power on earth. For a discussion of this theme in 2 Maccabees, see J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 164-65.

²⁰ Cf. Colpe, “ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου,” *TDNT* 8:430-31; Maisch, *Heilung*, 103.

²¹ So most commentators.

²² E.g., T. L. Budesheim, “Jesus and the Disciples in Conflict with Judaism,” *ZNW* 62 (1971): 190-209, 192; Schmithals, *Markus*, 151; Kiilunen, *Vollmacht*, 120, n. 25; Hofius, “Zuspruch,” 43. Only God can forgive sins and heal a paralytic (cf. Ps 103:3). See also Gundry, *Mark*, 118.

by Jesus.²³ The healing miracle demonstrates not only that the man has been forgiven; the parallel between the healing, effectuated by a word of Jesus, and the absolution of the man implies that Jesus personally has forgiven the man. The word of forgiveness (2:5) and the word of healing (2:11) must both be understood as creative words accomplishing what they say.²⁴

Thus, although Jesus' saying in 2:5 is in itself ambiguous, it is clear from the Markan context that Jesus does more than merely announce God's forgiveness. The words are a performative utterance accomplishing the forgiveness of the man's sins in the moment they are said.²⁵ It should be no doubt, then, that Mark portrays Jesus as a pardoner of sins committed against God.²⁶

3.3. *Did God Alone Forgive Sins in Early Judaism?*

3.3.1. Introduction

Does Jesus' act of forgiving the paralytic's sins put him in a role which is uniquely God's? The scribes do not object to a prophetic, priestly, or, for that matter, a messianic act; their difficulty is that Jesus does what God alone can do, and there is nothing in the text which suggests that Mark or his readers would disagree with their view. Judging from Mark 2:1-12 alone, the implication of Jesus' action is clear: he is acting as God. Nevertheless, Broadhead, whose stated object of his interpretation is the *text* of Mark claims that "the first reader" *knows* that "God's forgiveness is

²³ Marcus, *Mark*, 223, strangely attributes the miracle to the power of God in distinction from Jesus' power on account of the passive ἐγείρω in 2:12. If a passive sense, "he was raised" rather than "he rose" is implied (and this is questionable; see 5.5), this would point to Jesus who commands the man to rise, rather than God.

²⁴ Several scholars posit two different stories behind this pericope, one healing story (2:1-5, 11-12) and one controversy story (2:6-10), the latter being inserted in the former (see e.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 1:152-53; for a recent defence of a slightly modified form of this view, see T. Hägerland "Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission" [Ph.D. diss., University of Gothenburg, 2009]). This, if correct, is further evidence that Mark or the original author of this pericope understood Jesus' saying in 2:5 as referring to Jesus, since the insertion of 2:6-10 indicates how Jesus' saying was interpreted. For the literary unity of the present pericope, see J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1-3:6* (SBLDS 48; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 66-76.

²⁵ The present tense is grammatically an "aoristic present" with the force "in this moment forgiven." See BDF § 320; J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (4 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908-76), 1:119; cf. Taylor, *Mark*, 195; Gundry, *Mark*, 112; Hofius, "Zuspruch," 38-39; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 94; France, *Mark*, 125.

²⁶ So many scholars including, Cranfield, *Mark*, 99; Maisch, *Heilung*, 101-4; Klauck, "Frage," 227; Hurtado, *Mark*, 37; Hooker, *Mark*, 86; Gundry, *Mark*, 112; Marcus, *Mark*, 222-23; Hofius, "Zuspruch," 44; France, *Mark*, 125-26; Collins, *Mark*, 185.

announced and actualized through human figures” and that “pronouncing forgiveness of sin is a priestly task.”²⁷ He goes on to explain that, while later readers may believe that Jesus himself forgives sins, “the first reader is left with a distinct claim wholly congruent with the theology of the Old Testament: Jesus, the son of man, is empowered to announce God’s forgiveness for sinners.” The “first reader,” obviously, has knowledge which he or she brings to the text and which softens the distinct claim of the text itself. Broadhead’s understanding of Jesus as acting in a priestly role in this passage is so strong that he subsumes this pericope under the christological title “priest” in his study of titles in Mark, and he concludes: “Thus, Jesus does in Mk 2.1-13 what only a priest of God can do – offer God’s forgiveness for sins.”²⁸ This is, as we have seen, not what the text itself says. Since Broadhead, however, argues that this is the understanding the first reader would bring to the text we have good reasons to examine if his claim has any foundation in the extant Jewish literature.

We must at the outset note that we have to do with two related but somewhat different questions. On the one hand, we need to ask if anyone except God actually could forgive sin. That is, is the view of the scribes congruent with early Jewish thinking or has Mark attributed to them an idea which is without foundation? On the other hand, we have the question of how and by whom God’s forgiveness was announced. Did priestly absolution constitute a part of the temple liturgy as Broadhead assumes?

We begin, however, with God as pardoner of sins.²⁹ The OT and the early Jewish literature ascribe forgiveness to God at numerous places.³⁰ A clear example of this which like that of Jesus in Mark 2:5 is a performative declaration³¹ is found in Num 14:19-20. Moses prays for forgiveness on behalf of the people and God

²⁷ Broadhead, *Mark*, 31-32.

²⁸ E. K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 69. The inclusion of the title “priest” in his study is surprising, since this title is not used for Jesus in Mark!

²⁹ I have discussed this question in much more detail elsewhere. See D. Johansson, “‘Who Can Forgive Sins but God Alone?’ Human and Angelic Agents, and Divine Forgiveness in Early Judaism,” *JSNT* 33 (2011): 351-74.

³⁰ Exod 34:6-7, 9; Num 14:18-20; 2 Sam 12:13; Pss 25:18; 32:1-5; 51:1-4, 9-11; 85:2; 99:8; 103:3; 130:4; Isa 43:25-26; 44:22; 55:7; Jer 31:34; Dan 9:9; Mic 7:19; Zech 3:4; Sir 16:11; 28:2; 1QS 2:8; CD 3:18; 4:10; 20:34; 1QH 6:24; *Pr. Man.* 7b, 13, 14. See further also Str-B 1:421-22; 424-25; 495; 795-97; 2:585-86. For a brief discussion, see Klauck, “Sünde- und Vergebung,” 237.

³¹ See Hofius, “Zuspruch,” 39, n.7.

responds: “I have pardoned according to your word.” Many passages highlight the gracious nature of Israel’s God (Exod 34:6-7) or promise future forgiveness of God (Isa 43:25), who also in this regard is supreme and incomparable with other gods (Mic 7:18-19).³² It may then perhaps come as a surprise that it is rather difficult to find an exact parallel to the scribes’ statement, that God *alone* can forgive sins. The closest biblical parallel is probably Ps 103:2-5,³³ which lists YHWH’s forgiveness alongside divine prerogatives, such as healing of diseases and redemption from death.³⁴ But, it is no more than an implicit affirmation. Of course, given the view that all sins, whether they are committed against God or human beings, are transgressions of God’s commandments, it might simply be taken for granted.³⁵ Only the one who has been sinned against can forgive. This and the emphasis of God’s willingness to forgive probably imply that the right to bestow forgiveness is uniquely divine. Explicit affirmations of this idea are, however, not completely absent, but we have to turn to the Rabbinic literature. In the Midrash Psalms, David says to God: “No one can forgive sins but you alone” (*Midr. Ps. 17:3*),³⁶ which is very close to the remark made by the Markan scribes.

Scholars have nevertheless brought forward a number of rather disparate passages to demonstrate that early Judaism actually knew of other figures who forgave sins committed against God. To these we turn now.

³² Cf. F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24E; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 595, 597.

³³ This juxtaposition of forgiveness and healing is present also in Mark 2. Note further Isa 33:22-24, which speaks about healing of paralytics and forgiveness of sins. See further C.-H. Sung, *Vergebung der Sünden: Jesu Praxis der Sündenvergebung nach den Synoptikern und ihre Voraussetzungen im Alten Testament und frühen Judentum* (WUNT 2:57; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1993), 213-15.

³⁴ The LXX translator’s decision to render מְלַחֵם with εὐιλατεύω, a verb that describes *divine* mercy (see LSJ 717; cf. LXX Deut 29:19; Ps 98:8), gives some support to this view.

³⁵ Freedman and Willoughby, “שָׁמַיִם,” *TDOT* 10:34-35. For an explicit link between sins against fellow human beings and sins against God, see e.g., Gen 39:9; 2 Sam 12:13-14; Sir 28:2; cf. Matt 6:12, 15; Luke 15:18, 21. In fact, Ps 51:1-4 seems to imply that sins against the neighbour are in some sense committed against God alone. Despite adultery and murder, the psalmist can declare that “against you, you only, have I sinned.” For a discussion, see H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (trans. H.C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 502-03.

³⁶ Hofius “Zuspruch,” 40, n. 11.

3.3.2. Did a Priestly or High-Priestly Absolution Exist in Early Judaism?

Broadhead claims, as we noted, that Jesus' action is priestly. He follows the lead of several other scholars.³⁷ Given the prominent place of absolution in the Christian tradition it is natural to assume that the Jewish priests actually pronounced an absolution in the temple cult. The problem is that no firm evidence exists in the extant Jewish sources,³⁸ and the few sources which describe the temple liturgy appear to contradict the view. *The Letter of Aristeas* (92-95) states that a complete silence reigned in the temple during the sacrifices, which makes it unlikely that the priests verbally forgave sins.³⁹ The descriptions of the Day of Atonement in Sir 50:5-21 and the Mishnah tractate Yoma point in the same direction. Although several verbal acts of the high priest are mentioned, there is no mentioning of an absolution.⁴⁰ This seems to rule out not only a priestly absolution, but also the possibility that the high priest, in distinction from ordinary priests, forgave sins.⁴¹ There is, in other words, no conclusive evidence that priests pronounced an absolution in the context of sacrifices, even less that they themselves forgave sins.⁴² Priests could atone for sins and perhaps intercede for sinners, but God himself remained the sovereign pardoner of sins.

In this light it is clearly incorrect to assume that the first reader would understand Jesus' act in Mark 2:5 as a priestly act.⁴³ And, even if our conclusion

³⁷ Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 53; Haenchen, *Markus*, 102; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 2006), 59-62, 231.

³⁸ See esp. O. Hofius, "Vergebungszuspruch und Vollmachtsfrage: Mk 2,1-12 und das Problem priestlicher Absolution im Antiken Judentum," in idem, *Neutestamentliche Studien*, 57-69.

³⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 80-81, 109.

⁴⁰ Hofius, "Vergebungszuspruch," 61-62. Hofius also surveys Samaritan literature and finds no evidence for an act of absolution (62-67).

⁴¹ This has been claimed by e.g., G. Friedrich, "Messianische Hohepriestererwartung in den Synoptikern," *ZTK* 53 (1956): 265-311; Grundmann, *Markus*, 76; C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *JSHJ* 5 (2007): 57-79. For a critical assessment, see Hägerland, "Forgiveness," 126-130.

⁴² Hofius, "Vergebungszuspruch," 67: "Die Behauptung, dass das antike Judentum dem Priester bzw. dem Hohenpriester die Vollmacht zuerkannt habe, von Sünden loszusprechen, entbehrt jeglicher Quellengrundlage. Wir wissen weder etwas von einem priesterlichen Absolutionsakt gegenüber dem einzelnen noch auch von einem priesterlichen Vergebungszuspruch an die im Tempel versammelte Gemeinde." Cf. also H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 56, n. 20. L. Goppelt points out the lack of any act of absolution in the synagogue liturgy (*Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975], 86).

⁴³ Contra, Broadhead, *Naming*, 69.

about the temple rituals in this regard would be faulty, due to the lack of ancient sources, and the priests actually pronounced an absolution in connection with sacrifices, it must be stressed that this is not the issue in Mark 2. The scribes do not accuse Jesus for taking on a priestly prerogative or offering forgiveness outside the cult; the accusation is more precise than that: “Who can forgive sins except one, God?”

3.3.3. The Prayer of Nabonidus

Not long after the publication of a Qumran fragment often called the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242 or 4QPrNab), Dupont-Sommer suggested that the Essenes held a different view on the question of forgiving sins than the Pharisees, since, in his view, the fragment attributes the pardoning of sins to a Jewish exorcist.⁴⁴ The first words of line 4 read: וַחֲטָאִי שָׁבַק לִּהּ גִּזְרִי. Most scholars agree that the first two words should be translated ‘and my sins he forgave.’ There is no consensus, however, in regard to the grammatical subject of the verb שָׁבַק, and to what or to whom לִּהּ refers. Dupont-Sommer read the verb with the following גִּזְרִי and translated, ‘and an exorcist forgave my sins.’⁴⁵ Other scholars have argued that שָׁבַק instead should be read with the preceding line and that God is the implied subject of the verb.⁴⁶

Four things should be noted.⁴⁷ First, the text is on the whole in a very fragmentary state and the printed text in most editions is largely conjectural. Furthermore, lines 1-5 constitute only the superscription and a short note on what has occasioned the writing. The main body of the text which may have elaborated lines 3-4 at some length is actually missing. It is, in other words, difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the Jewish man’s actions.

Second, as already noted, there is no consensus as to whether God or the Jewish man is the subject of the verb שָׁבַק. Those who take the man as the subject of

⁴⁴ A. Dupont-Sommer, “Exorcismes et guérisons dans les écrits de Qoumrân,” in *Congress Volume: Oxford 1959* (eds. G. W. Anderson et al.; VTSup 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960), 246-61, 260. Whether the man was an exorcist is debated. Others have proposed that he was a diviner or a prophet.

⁴⁵ See the translations by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (3rd ed.; London: Penguin, 1990) and F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996). Cf. also e.g., Dunn, *Partings*, 60-61; Gundry, *Mark*, 116; Marcus, *Mark*, 217.

⁴⁶ P. Grelot, “La prière de Nabonide (4 Q Or Nab),” *RevQ* 9 (1978): 483-95; J. J. Collins, “4QPrayer of Nabonidus ar,” *DJD*, 22:83-93, 89-91.

⁴⁷ See Johansson, “Forgiveness,” 356-60, for a fuller discussion.

the verb argue that the first four words of line four should be considered as a single sentence, defined by the two 𐤀 which precede 𐤍𐤌𐤍 and the following verb 𐤍𐤌. The problem with this interpretation is that it is difficult to give a proper explanation for the presence of 𐤌. From this point of view it seems better to understand God as the subject of the verb and understand 𐤌 as a pronominal object which refers back to 𐤍𐤌𐤍. In this case 𐤍 begins a new sentence. This would then give the translation, “and my sin, he [God] forgave it. A diviner, a Jewish man ...”

Third, taking into account Nabonidus’ status as a gentile, it seems probable that the Jewish seer actually identified the source of the forgiveness that was bestowed upon the king. What sense would it make in a non-Jewish context if a Jew suddenly appears and bestows forgiveness? Collins’ explanation, that the Jew came forward after Nabonidus suddenly had been healed and identified the Most High God as the agent of his healing, telling the king to honour him, seems to best capture the meaning of the text as it has come down to us.⁴⁸ Since forgiveness and healing are often connected in early Jewish thinking,⁴⁹ God would likely be ascribed both. The cure of the king demonstrated that God had forgiven him his idolatry, and this the Jewish man announced to Nabonidus.

Finally, it is significant for the interpretation of this text that everywhere else in the Qumran library forgiveness is attributed to God.⁵⁰ This would seem to undermine the suggestion by Dupont-Sommer that the covenanters at Qumran held a differing opinion on the issue. In conclusion then, 4Q242 does not provide unambiguous evidence that a human being could forgive sins committed against God.

3.3.4. Did Prophets Forgive Sins?

In a recent dissertation, Hägerland has argued that prophets not only announced God’s forgiveness of sins (cf. 2 Sam 12:13), but that they actually forgave.⁵¹ He

⁴⁸ Collins, “4QPrayer,” 91.

⁴⁹ Cf. 2 Chr 7:14; Ps 32:3-4; 103:3; 107:17; Isa 33:24; Mark 2:1-12 with par.; 1 Cor 11:30; Jas 5:15-16; *b. Ned.* 41a. See further Str-B 1:495-96.

⁵⁰ E.g., 1QS 2:8; 11:3; CD 2:4-5; 3:18; 1QH 6:24; 12:37; 15:18, 30, 35; 11QTgJob 38:2. 11QMelch II:7-8 (J. Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic Language and the Study of the New Testament,” *JBL* 99 [1980]: 5-21, 16), CD 13:10; 14:19 (Dupont-Sommer, “Exorcismes,” 260-1) are no exceptions. Melchizedek is an “agent of the expiation,” but he does not forgive sins. CD 13:10 alludes to Isa 58:6 and has more to do with social justice than absolution. For CD 14:19, see below.

⁵¹ Hägerland, “Forgiveness,” 132-56, 168.

points to a passage in Josephus' *Antiquities* (6:92-93), where the Israelites beg the prophet Samuel to intercede with God. Hägerland translates the passage,

...they began to implore the prophet as a mild and gentle father, to make God benevolent towards them and to forgive this sin [τὸν θεὸν αὐτοῖς εὐμενῇ καταστήσαι καὶ ταύτην ἄφεῖναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν], which they had committed in addition to other things...

The traditional translations of this passage, which take God to be the implied subject of ἄφεῖναι, is according to Hägerland incorrect, as the verb καταστήσαι in that case would be used in a twofold sense and would take as complements to the subject (God) both an adjective (εὐμενῇ) and a verb (ἄφεῖναι).

I do not find his case convincing, however. καί is probably not used in its ordinary sense here, to connect two clauses, but functions as a καί *consecutivum*.⁵² "... they begged the prophet [...], to make God benevolent towards them *so that* he would forgive this sin..."⁵³ This makes perfect sense in the immediate context, for Samuel responds with a promise "to beg and to persuade God to pardon them for these things [συγγνωῶναι περὶ τούτων αὐτοῖς]." The text never says that Samuel actually forgave the sin, only that he promised to intercede with God. Recognizing this problem, Hägerland suggests that "to make God benevolent" and "to forgive this sin" are used more or less synonymously by Josephus, that is, the verb ἄφεῖναι is used in the sense "to dismiss", "to send away." But, if the verb has this sense, which is doubtful,⁵⁴ it is difficult to see how the passage demonstrates that prophets could forgive sin on behalf of God. Samuel does not forgive in the sense Jesus does, irrespective of whether Jesus personally forgives or announces God's forgiveness. The same language may be used, but the meaning is clearly different. Rather than providing evidence that prophets forgave sins in the place of God, the Josephus passage is an example of a prophet interceding with God.

⁵² BDF 442 2a. For examples of καί consecutivum in Josephus see e.g., *Ant.* 3:6; 5:20; *J.W.* 2:237.

⁵³ Cf e.g., Thackeray's translation in LCL.

⁵⁴ The sense that Hägerland assigns to ἄφεῖναι is, as far as I am aware, without parallel in Josephus. When Josephus uses the verb in connection with sin it refers to the very act of reconciliation. See *Ant.* 2:146; 11:144; 15:356; *J.W.* 2:77. Hägerland contrasts Josephus' use of συγγνωῶναι for God and ἄφεῖναι for the prophet and suggests that the latter is employed for "the prophet's act of offering forgiveness *on behalf of God*" ("Forgiveness," 139; his italics). But it is doubtful that Josephus attributed different meanings to the two verbs. The fact that they appear together elsewhere in the corpus (*Ant.* 2:145-146; 11:144) suggests that he regarded them as more or less synonymous.

3.3.5. Was the Messiah Expected to Forgive Sins?

From time to time it has been maintained that Jesus' verbal act conformed to messianic expectations.⁵⁵ Three passages in particular have been put forward in support of a Messiah who was going to forgive sins. None of them is convincing, however. *T. Levi* 18:9 mentions the well-known theme in Jewish predictions of the future that sin will cease,⁵⁶ but the eschatological figure described here does not personally forgive sins committed against God.⁵⁷

Conclusive evidence is also lacking in the Targum of Isaiah 53.⁵⁸ The passage speaks of forgiveness for God's people in the Messianic age, stressing that the Messiah will mediate forgiveness by means of intercession, and perhaps also that his teaching will lead to obedience. But the bestowal of forgiveness belongs to God alone.⁵⁹ As Hofius puts it, "Der Messias *erwirkt* und *vermittelt* die Sündenvergebung, aber er *wirkt* und *gewährt* sie nicht."⁶⁰

The issue is a little more complex in CD 14:18-19.⁶¹ Vermes translates this passage: "This is the exact statement of the statues in which [they shall walk until the coming of the Messiah]h of Aaron and Israel who will pardon their iniquity." Against this translation it could be argued that it is neither clear whether God or the Messiah is the subject of the verb כִּפַּר, nor whether the verb form is active or passive.⁶² Furthermore, it is debatable that "forgive" is the most adequate rendering of כִּפַּר.

⁵⁵ Already J. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1892), 57, but his view was challenged by G. Dalman, (*Die Worte Jesu: Band I* [Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung], 214-15) and P. Billerbeck (Str-B 1:495).

⁵⁶ H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 181. See *Pss. Sol.* 17:27; *4 Ezra* 6:27-28; 7:113-14; *2 Bar.* 73:4; *Jub.* 4:26; 23:29; *1 En.* 69:29; 91:8, 11, 14, 17; 92:5; 100:5.

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g., Gnika, "Elend," 202. Even less relevant are passages such as *Pss. Sol.* 17:27, 30, 36 (cf. *Jub.* 5:11-12), which depict the Messiah as driving out and destroying sinners.

⁵⁸ Proposed by K. Koch, "Messias und Sündenvergebung in Jesaja 53-Targum: Ein Beitrag zu der Praxis der aramäischen Bibelübersetzung," *JSJ* 3 (1972):117-48.

⁵⁹ For a careful and detailed analysis with an abundance of parallels from other Hebrew and Aramaic sources, see O. Hofius, "Kennt der Targum zu Jesaja 53 einen sündenvergebenden Messias?," in idem, *Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT 132; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck]): 70-107.

⁶⁰ Hofius, "Targum," 104; his italics.

⁶¹ J. M. Baumgarten, "Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19 (4Q266 10 I 12-13)," in *Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 30; ed. D.W. Parry and E. C. Ulrich; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 537-44.

⁶² See B. Janowski, "Sündenvergebung 'um Hiobs willen': Fürbitte und Vergebung in 11QtgJob 38,2f. und Hi 42,9f. LXX," in idem, *Gottes Gegenwart in Israel: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993), 40-69, 67-8. God is the subject of כִּפַּר everywhere else in the document (2:4-5; 3:18; 4:6, 9, 10; 20:34).

Normally כפר refers to ritual expiation of sin, and a priest is the subject of the action. There are cases – it should be pointed out – when God is the subject of the verb and “forgive” may be an appropriate translation (e.g., Jer 18:31). What one has to demonstrate, however, is that this is an appropriate translation when other figures than God are subjects of the action. Thus, it seems more likely that the text envisions a day when the Messiah of Aaron and Israel will be the source of atonement, rather than that it depicts a Messiah who personally forgives sins.⁶³

3.3.6. The Disciples as Mediators of Forgiveness

From a different point of view, Jesus’ authority to forgive sins has been compared to his authorization of the disciples to forgive sins (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23).⁶⁴ One could posit the case that readers of Mark would view Jesus’ action from their experience of liturgical loosing and binding sins in their communities with the result that Jesus may be seen as doing what ministers and perhaps all believers did.

Against this argument, we should first note that these or similar sayings are absent from Mark. The power to forgive is not extended to Jesus’ disciples in Mark (cf. 3:15; 6:7, 13). Only Jesus and God (cf. 11:25) forgive or are expected to forgive sins, and there is no indication that the authority ascribed to Jesus in Mark 2:5-10 is shared by any other human beings. In other words, nothing in the Gospel itself suggests this interpretation.⁶⁵

However, even if we grant that Mark’s audience would be familiar with liturgical acts of loosing and binding sins in their Christian communities, there are important differences between Mark’s portrayal of Jesus and the power given to the disciples in Matt 18:18⁶⁶ and John 20:23.⁶⁷ First, it is clear that the disciples are not granted an autonomous right to forgive and retain sin. Whether they are carrying out

⁶³ Cf. the translation by García Martínez: “And this is the exact interpretation of the regulations by which [they shall be ruled] [until there arises the messiah] of Aaron and Israel. He shall atone for their sins [... pardon, and guilt]” (*Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 44).

⁶⁴ Gould, *Mark*, 37, n. 2; Dunn, *Partings*, 231.

⁶⁵ Note that Matthew does not include the scribes’ statement that only God can forgive sins (9:3). This may be due to his emphasis of the disciples’ right to bind and loose.

⁶⁶ Although it is probably implied, it is not clear whether the loosing actually involved announcement of forgiveness in Matt 16:19 and 18:18. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:634-41.

⁶⁷ On John 20:23, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI* (AB 29a; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1023-24, 1039-45; E. Hansen, “Forgiving and Retaining Sin: A Study of the Text and Context of John 20:23,” *HBT* 19 (1997): 24-32; T. Hägerland, “The Power of Prophecy: A Septuagintal Echo in John 20:19-23,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 84-103.

a decision already taken in heaven, or heaven ratifies the disciples' declaration, heaven remains the final authority. In fact, the thrust of both passages is on the congruence between their acts of forgiving or binding and the heavenly verdict. To be sure, the disciples are given a remarkable authority, but Jesus himself acts in an even more exalted role by granting this authority to them. Second, the contexts of both Matt 18:18 and John 20:23 indicate that the disciples will receive divine assistance when carrying out their duties. In Matthew, the presence of Jesus (18:20) will guarantee that the right decisions are taken.⁶⁸ In John, the authority of the disciples is closely bound up with the gift of Spirit (20:22), which suggests that the Spirit will guide them to forgive and retain according to the will of heaven.⁶⁹

Thus, although it could be argued that a similar line of thought may be found behind Jesus' act of forgiving in Mark, it is important to note that there are no indications of this. The focus in the Markan context is christological rather than ecclesiological,⁷⁰ and everything points to Jesus himself acting in a divine role. Furthermore, nowhere is it stated that this authority is given to Jesus.⁷¹ The fact that the disciples are given the right to forgive sins in other early Christian literature does not diminish the significance that Mark portrays Jesus as one who forgives sins. On the contrary, these passages give additional evidence that Jesus was thought to possess the right to forgive in such a way that he could even authorize his disciples to forgive, with the assurance that their verdicts would be in harmony with the will of heaven.

3.3.7. The Angel of YHWH

Like prophets, angels sometimes mediate and announce God's forgiveness.⁷² While these actions hardly parallel the description of Jesus in Mark 2,⁷³ there may be one or

⁶⁸ Hägerland, "Forgiveness," 116, following, K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew, and its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1954), 28.

⁶⁹ I prefer to use "heaven" as it is not clear if this refers only to God or if the heavenly Jesus also is involved.

⁷⁰ Gnilka, "Elend," 206.

⁷¹ Note that in Matthew God is praised for having given "such authority to men" (Matt 9:8).

⁷² Isa 6:7; *Jub.* 41:24; cf. LXX Dan 4:34 and *Jos. Asen.* 15:2-10 where acceptance of repentance is announced.

⁷³ K. Berger, "Almosen für Israel: Zum historischen Kontext der paulinischen Kollekte," *NTS* 23 (1977): 180-204, 188, states that angelic announcement of forgiveness of sin constitutes the sole analogy for Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness.

two OT passages⁷⁴ which in fact do predicate the authority to forgive sin to the Angel of YHWH. The first of these is found in Exod 23:20-21,

“Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression [לֹא יִשָּׂא לַפִּשְׁעֵכֶם], for my name is in him.”

Though the passage states that the Angel of YHWH shall *not* pardon transgressions, the implication seems to be that this angel actually has authority, not only to retain sins, but also to forgive them.⁷⁵ There is a very close parallel to this passage in a similar context in Josh 24:19 with YHWH as subject:⁷⁶ “But Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve YHWH, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions [לֹא יִשָּׂא לַפִּשְׁעֵכֶם] or your sins.’”⁷⁷ Just as the angel shall not pardon if the people rebel against him, so God will not forgive if they forsake him (Josh 24:20). If we turn to the LXX, however, there is a striking difference between the two passages. For, while the Joshua passage has been rendered quite literally, οὐκ ἀνήσει ὑμῶν τὰ ἁμαρτήματα, the translator of the Exodus passage rewrote the clause, ‘for he shall not hold you in undue awe [οὐ γὰρ μὴ ὑποστείληταί σε]’.⁷⁸ It was obviously problematic to predicate forgiveness to the angel. From the rabbinic tradition we also know that the text was debated. According to some passages, “heretics” used the text to defend worship of the Angel of YHWH, as a divine being distinct from God himself (*bSanh* 38b; *Exod. R.* 32:4). The attribution of the authority to forgive sins should have been put forward in defence of this practice. In his discussion of these passages, Segal argues convincingly that the rabbis debated with Christians, and that Jesus’ claim to this authority constituted the background of this debate.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *T. Abr.* 14:14 should perhaps be included here as well. But it is difficult to decide whether God himself or the Angel of YHWH is speaking. See Johansson, “Forgiveness,” 367.

⁷⁵ J. Marcus, “Authority to Forgive Sins upon the Earth: The Shema in the Gospel of Mark,” in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner; JSNTSup, 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): 196-211, 207.

⁷⁶ Note the parallels between Exod 23:20-33 and Josh 24:11-27.

⁷⁷ Cf. Deut 29:20; 2 Kgs 24:4; Job 7:21; Isa 2:9; Jer 18:23.

⁷⁸ The NETS translation.

⁷⁹ A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA, 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 68-73. See also Marcus, “Authority,” 207.

The second passage, Zech 3:4, is more ambiguous. After the high priest Joshua's clothes have been removed and he has been given new pure garments, the Angel of YHWH addresses Joshua: "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you [העברתי מעליך עונך], and I will clothe you with pure vestments." Here, it is not clear whether the Angel of YHWH actually states that *he* has forgiven Joshua's sins⁸⁰ or if the angel merely interprets the meaning of the symbolic act he initiated (cf. Isa 6:7), namely that Joshua's guilt is removed by the taking away of the filthy clothes. The verb עבר hiph. followed by sin terminology as the direct object can sometimes imply forgiveness (Job 7:21), but this is not always the case (cf. 2 Sam 24:10; Esth 8:3; Jer 11:15).⁸¹ Clearly, the angel affects the removal of iniquity, but does this also mean that he bestows forgiveness or is it presumed that YHWH does? In my view, the language of the passage is too ambiguous to allow any definite conclusion.

Do these passages, then, constitute factual exceptions to the view that God alone can pardon sins? Given the very close association between YHWH and his angel in the biblical literature,⁸² this seems doubtful. Even though it could be argued that both Exod 23:20-21 and Zech 3:4 portray the angel as somewhat distinct from YHWH, there is so much overlap between YHWH and his angel in these passages⁸³ that it is difficult to see that the attribution of forgiveness to the Angel of YHWH would call into question that forgiveness is a divine prerogative.

3.3.8. Conclusion

The Markan text states unambiguously that only God can forgive sins (2:7). Apart from the possible exception of the Angel of YHWH, we have found no evidence that would contradict this statement. There is thus no reason to believe that the first readers would qualify what the Markan scribes say. On the contrary, they would

⁸⁰ C. F. Keil, *The Minor Prophets* (reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), 526.

⁸¹ The same goes for the verb ἀφαιρῆν used by the LXX translator, which sometimes when followed by sin terminology is used in the sense to forgive (e.g., Exod 34:7, 9; Num 14:18; but not in Isa 6:7).

⁸² Several passages seem to suggest that the Angel of YHWH is the visible manifestation of YHWH (e.g., Gen 16:7-14; Exod 3:2-7; Judg 13:3-22); see C. A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU, 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), esp. 51-69.

⁸³ Particularly the angel's possession of the divine name (Exod. 23.21) shows that he is closely linked to God. Cf. Ps 83:18 which, according to the masoretic pointing, says: "They shall know that you alone bear the name YHWH, Most High over all the earth." For the close association of the Angel of YHWH with God in each of the passages, see J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 335-36; Gieschen, *Christology*, 67 on Exod 23; C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (AB 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 188-89 on Zech 3.

agree with them: Only God can forgive sins. It seems clear, then, that Jesus is assuming a role which belonged to Israel's God alone.

It may be the case, however, that the one clear exception we noted provides a clue to how early Christians understood the relationship between Jesus and God. If early Christians identified Jesus with the Angel of YHWH or at least understood the relationship of God and Jesus as analogous to the relationship between YHWH and his angel, the Exodus text would have served their purpose well. Jesus could be identified with and distinguished from YHWH at the same time.⁸⁴ The evidence Segal has drawn attention to suggests that at least some Christian groups made this connection. It should be noted, however, that most readers of Mark, who in all likelihood did not know Hebrew, would have missed that the Angel of YHWH had this authority in the OT, unless they used a more literal translation of Exod 23:20-21 than that of the LXX.

3.4. Additional Evidence for a Divine Identity in Mark 2:1-12

3.4.1. Jesus' Supernatural Knowledge

Three times in the present passage, Jesus displays knowledge of the hearts of humans. He knows that the friends of the paralytic have faith (2:5); he knows that the man needs forgiveness (2:5); and he knows what the Scribes are saying in their hearts (2:6-8). In the first case, Jesus could perhaps have drawn a conclusion from the men's eagerness to bring the man to him, and the second might be explained by the fact that sickness and sin often were associated, but at least in the third case the knowledge is clearly supernatural.⁸⁵ A similar penetration into the hearts of humans is displayed elsewhere in the Gospel: in 3:6 Jesus sees the hardness of heart and in 12:15 he knows the hypocrisy of his opponents. Other examples of what seem to be supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus include his precise predictions concerning the colt being tied up in Mark 11:3 and the man carrying a water jar in 14:13-15, as well as his knowledge about more distant future events.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ For an argument that this and other passages in Mark present Jesus as the Angel of YHWH, see G. H. Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament Christology" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001).

⁸⁵ Contra Cranfield, *Mark*, 98, who states that their faces expressed what they were thinking.

⁸⁶ Cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 12:8; 13:3-36; 14:7-8, 18-21, 27-30. For a more extensive list of passages and a general discussion of Jesus' supernatural knowledge in Mark, see R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 133-36.

The latter should perhaps be labeled as prophetic, but it is noteworthy that Jesus makes these statements without any references to God or the Spirit, which is usually the case in the OT and elsewhere in the NT (cf. e.g., Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). Moreover, the claim by Jesus, at the end of his most detailed prediction of the future, that his words will outlast heaven and earth (13:31), a probable allusion to Isa 40:8, puts his words on a par with God's.⁸⁷ With regard to Mark 11:3 and 14:13-15, it has been argued that this precise knowledge is due to prior arrangements by Jesus.⁸⁸ It may historically have been the case, but, as Blackburn notes, Mark's emphasis of the exact fulfillment of Jesus' predictions⁸⁹ suggests Mark thought of supernatural knowledge.⁹⁰ That human beings convey this kind of knowledge is, however, not completely without precedent. 2 Kings tells at more than one place how the prophet Elisha could "hear" people's conversations from a far distance (2 Kgs 5:25-26; 6:8-14),⁹¹ and the NT also provides some evidence that similar extraordinary knowledge was expected by prophets.⁹² But these examples concern external circumstances, things people who were or had been present could know.

It is different with the knowledge of a human's innermost thoughts.⁹³ This is a divine attribute according to the OT and early Jewish literature, as well as Greco-Roman traditions.⁹⁴ 1 Sam 16:7 is especially instructive in this regard. God is not only distinguishing his own discernment from that of humans, but it is also clear that the prophet Samuel lacks this gift, as also he is looking for the outward appearance of the future king. Other passages state explicitly that this is God's exclusive prerogative (1 Kgs 8:39), an attribute belonging to the repertoire which demonstrates his deity (*Let. Aris.* 132-33; *1 En.* 84:3). Thus, just as Jesus acts in a divine role when

⁸⁷ Brown, *John*, 708, notes that it is a privilege of YHWH to declare things to come, which sets him apart from all other gods (cf. Isa 42:9; 46:9-10; 44:7; 48:14).

⁸⁸ Lane, *Mark*, 395, 499.

⁸⁹ Gundry, *Mark*, 624, enumerates five details that are fulfilled in 11:2-6.

⁹⁰ Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 136.

⁹¹ Cf. however 2 Kgs 4:27, which suggests that YHWH gives Elisha supernatural knowledge by telling him.

⁹² Mark 14:65; Luke 7:39; John 4:19; cf. also *Jos. Asen.* 26:6. For the Greco-Roman evidence, see Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 15-23; 77-78; 136.

⁹³ Contra Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 137, who blurs this distinction.

⁹⁴ 1 Sam 16:7; 1 Kgs 8:39; 1 Chron 28:9; Pss 7:10; 94:11; 139; Prov 24:12; Jer 11:20; 17:10; Sir 42:18-20; *Jub.* 15:30; *1 En.* 84:3; *Let. Aris.* 132-33; *Pss. Sol.* 9:3; 14:8; *T. Zeb.* 5:2; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2:166; *Ant.* 4:41; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom 8:27; 1 Thess 2:4. On the Greco-Roman evidence, see C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary: Vol. 1* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 532, n. 384. *Jos. Asen.* 23:8, and possibly also *Ps. Sol.* 17:25 may be exceptions.

he forgives the paralytic man's sins, so does Jesus when he knows the thoughts of the scribes.⁹⁵ Ironically, their objection underscores Jesus' divine identity to Mark's audience in more than one way.

3.4.2. The Restoration of the Paralytic

It is hardly fortuitous that the man who was forgiven and healed was a paralytic. The restoration of the lame was seen as a sign of divine activity and associated with God's own coming to his people. This is attested at several places in the OT, particularly in Isaiah.⁹⁶ Not unlike Ps 103:4, Isa 33:22-24 makes a direct connection between the healing from sickness and forgiveness. What is striking about the Isaiah passage is that lame people are singled out. Paralytics are also mentioned alongside the blind, deaf, and mute in Isa 35:5-6. This passage, which earlier often was referred to as evidence that the Messiah was expected to be a healer,⁹⁷ explicitly attributes the healing from these sicknesses to the intervention of God himself: "He will *come* and save you" (35:4).⁹⁸ Given Mark's programmatic citation of Isa 40:3, about the *coming* of YHWH, it seems plausible that Mark saw Jesus' healing miracle in this and other passages as a fulfilment of this promise.⁹⁹

It has been proposed that Isa 35:4-6 and related promises by the prophets were understood as metaphoric descriptions of God's eschatological renewal of the people of Israel, rather than referring to individual healings in early Judaism.¹⁰⁰ If this is correct, Mark and other early Christians would – somewhat surprisingly – have given these metaphors a literal application. But this means, at the same time, that Jesus' miracles were seen as fulfilling the OT promises and, therefore, also as

⁹⁵ Pesch, *Markus*, 1:150; Gnllka, "Elend," 104; Marcus, *Mark*, 222; Hofius, "Zuspruch," 43, n. 19. Cf. also P. Rolland, "Jésus connaissait leurs pensées," *ETL* 62 (1986): 118-21. See also Matt 12:25; Luke 6:8; 9:47; Rev 2:23 alluding to Jer 17:10, for Jesus sharing this divine attribute.

⁹⁶ Cf. Isa 33:22-24; 35:4-6; Jer 31:8; Mic 4:6, 7; Zeph 3:19.

⁹⁷ Cf. e.g., A. Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941), 81-99. Today, most biblical scholars doubt that there existed an expectation of a Messiah who would perform healing miracles in early Judaism. See J. H. Charlesworth, "The Son of David, Solomon, and Jesus," in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (ed. P. Borgen and S. Giversen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 72-87, 77.

⁹⁸ Cf. 4Q521, where God also is ascribed similar healings.

⁹⁹ So also e.g., Hofius, "Zuspruch," 47-48. See further 10.2.3.

¹⁰⁰ H. Kvalbein, "The Wonders of the End-Time: Metaphoric Language in 4Q521 and the Interpretation of Matthew 11.5par," *JSP* 18 (1998): 87-110. L. Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2:170; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003), 163-68, questions Kvalbein's thesis with reference to *Jub.* 23:26-20 and 2 *Bar.* 29:3, 6-7, but she also concludes that the miracles are ascribed to God himself.

signs of the eschatological renewal of God's people.¹⁰¹ That is, when Jesus heals and forgives the paralytic, it signifies healing from lameness and forgiveness for the entire people. This means, then, that the time for Isaiah's new exodus and the promised forgiveness for God's people (Isa 43:25) indeed has come.

3.4.3. The Blasphemy Accusation

The final piece of evidence for a high christology in the present passage is found in the blasphemy accusation made by the scribes: "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming [βλασφημεῖ]. Who can forgive sins except one, God? [τίς δύναται ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός;]." To begin with, we should note a couple of intratextual links. First, there is a link between this passage and the healing of the man with a withered hand in 3:1-6. These passages, which frame the so called "controversy stories" in 2:1-3:6, have a number of features in common.¹⁰² For example, unlike the other three stories, these two involve a miracle; the disease is in each case paralysis; Jesus perceives in both the stories the unspoken objection of his opponents. What is of interest here is the decision by Jesus' opponents to put Jesus to death (3:6). For the first time, there is a clear hint of Jesus' coming death by means of execution. Mark's linking of 3:1-6 with 2:1-12, however, implies that the cause for this decision is, not only Jesus' alleged breaking of the Sabbath law in the present passage, or the culmination of an increasing build up since the beginning of chapter two, but the blasphemy Jesus, in their view, committed by forgiving sins. That is, the opponents now spell out what was implicit already in the blasphemy accusation, namely, that Jesus deserves death, the punishment for all instances of blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:64).¹⁰³

This leads us to the second passage to consider, namely, the charge of blasphemy at the trial of Jesus. According to the Mishnah (*m. Sanh.* 7:5), it was only by pronouncing the divine name one was culpable of blasphemy and therefore subject to capital punishment. This understanding of blasphemy is hard to reconcile

¹⁰¹ Kvalbein, "Wonders," 108-09.

¹⁰² On Mark 2:1-3:6, see esp. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate*. Cf. also Gundry, *Mark*, 105-10; Marcus, *Mark*, 212-15; J. P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Plucking of the Grain on the Sabbath," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 561-81, 566-67.

¹⁰³ So also C. P. Anderson, "The Trial of Jesus as Jewish-Christian Polarization: Blasphemy and Polemic in Mark's Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Vol. 1: Paul and the Gospels* (ed. P. Richardson and D. Grauskou; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 107-25, 111. On blasphemy and death penalty, see O. Hofius, "βλασφημία, κτλ," *EDNT* 1: 220.

with Mark, where Jesus is reported to have used a circumlocution (“the Power”) rather than the divine name, and can hardly have occasioned the verdict.¹⁰⁴ Recent scholarship has, however, shown that the first century Jewish understanding of blasphemy was much broader, including cursing, insulting, and despising God, pronouncing the divine name, and the direct or indirect arrogation of divine prerogatives for oneself.¹⁰⁵ In the case of Jesus’ trial, there can be no doubt that the last of these is in view. Each of the three elements in Jesus’ response, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven,” (14:62) could have implied an encroachment of divine privileges. The claim to a heavenly throne, whether this was understood as referring to a second throne alongside God’s or, more likely, to the divine throne itself,¹⁰⁶ would have been seen as a claim to a power and status like that of God,¹⁰⁷ especially when combined with the claim to come on the clouds like a deity.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the ἐγὼ εἰμι, which in itself is ambiguous, could in connection with the other elements be taken as an allusion to the divine ἐγὼ εἰμι, and a confirmation, not only of Jesus’ messiahship, but also of his divine status.¹⁰⁹ Thus, if the Jews of Alexandria could accuse Gaius Caligula, the Roman emperor who did not share their faith, for blasphemy by giving himself a divine status,¹¹⁰ how much more would a Jewish man, who made similar claims, have elicited such a reaction?¹¹¹ Or, to mention another

¹⁰⁴ Cf. however, Gundry, *Mark*, 915-18.

¹⁰⁵ D. L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* (WUNT 2:106; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998), 30-112; Evans, *Mark*, 453-58; A. Yarbro Collins, “The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 379-401.

¹⁰⁶ M. Hengel, “Sit at my Right Hand!,” in idem, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 149 and R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2008), 172-78, argue that the throne of God must be in view, but D. Hannah, “The Throne of His Glory: The Divine Throne and Heavenly Mediators in Revelation and the Similitudes of Enoch,” *ZNW* 94 (2003): 68-96, 81, thinks the evidence is too ambiguous to allow any decision. But in the absence of any early, unambiguous evidence that Christ was thought to be enthroned on a separate throne, and in the light of that at least three different NT traditions clearly shared the notion of Christ sitting on the divine throne (Revelation, Hebrews, Matthew; see Hannah, “Throne,” 80), the balance seems to tip toward the view that the Markan Jesus claims the divine throne.

¹⁰⁷ Bock, *Blasphemy*, 200-206; Collins, “Blasphemy,” 399.

¹⁰⁸ On Jesus’ coming with the clouds, see 8.2 below.

¹⁰⁹ For Mark’s audience, who already have heard Jesus using the expression with this sense (6:50), this is a viable option (see 6.4). Hurtado, *Mark*, 254, suggests that the purpose of Mark’s version of the response (cf. Matt 26:64; Luke 22:67-70) is to make precisely this point. The textual variant attested in Θ, f⁴³, etc, which adds οὐ εἰπὼς ὅτι is probably an assimilation to Matthew and Luke.

¹¹⁰ Philo, *Embassy* 44-46. See Collins, “Blasphemy,” 387-88.

¹¹¹ Although Paul and Barnabas do not speak of blasphemy, they react in the same way as the High Priest by tearing their garments when the people of Lystra identify them as gods (Acts 14:11-15).

example, if Rabbi Akiba later could be accused for profaning the Shekinah, by interpreting the plural “thrones” in Dan 7:9 as referring to one throne for David and one for God (*b. Sanh.* 38b), how much more Jesus who claimed a throne for himself?¹¹²

This conclusion is strengthened by the link between the blasphemy accusation in 14:64 and the only other blasphemy accusation of Jesus, in 2:7. Together they probably mark a great *inclusio* in Mark’s Gospel.¹¹³ When Mark in 2:7, for the first time in his Gospel, uses the verb βλάσφημέω,¹¹⁴ he also provides a definition of the term:¹¹⁵ to blaspheme is to do what God alone may do and, therefore, also to threaten the oneness of YHWH, the unique status of the God of Israel, as is indicated by the rhetorical question, “who can forgive sins except *one*,¹¹⁶ God?” From Mark’s point of view, it was not a claim to be the Messiah,¹¹⁷ but the usurpation of divine prerogatives that provoked the Sanhedrin to pronounce Jesus guilty of blasphemy. But this also means that one of the major reasons, if not the main reason, for the conflict between the Markan Jesus and the leaders of the people in Mark, which no doubt also reflects a conflict between Christians and non-believing Jews,¹¹⁸ concerns Jesus’ identity and, from a Jewish point of view, the far too high claims that are made for Jesus. The first major controversy in Mark does not concern the interpretation of some aspects of the law, the status of the temple, or the messiahship of Jesus, but Jesus’ right to act in a capacity reserved for the God of Israel. This is what the conflict, which results in the unanimous verdict by the Sanhedrin, is about.¹¹⁹ In this way, Mark is very close to the Gospel of John, where

¹¹² Segal, *Two Powers*, 47-50, 94-95; Evans, *Mark*, 456.

¹¹³ Anderson, “Trial,” 117-18; H. Räisänen, *The “Messianic Secret” in Mark* (trans. C. M. Tuckett; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 228. Another link between the two passages is the appearances of the first and the last Son of Man saying (2:10; 14:62).

¹¹⁴ The verb or its cognate noun also appears in 3:28-29 (three times); 7:22; 14:64; 15:29.

¹¹⁵ P. G. Davis, “Mark’s Christological Paradox,” *JSNT* 35 (1989): 3-18, 8-9.

¹¹⁶ Most scholars take this statement as an allusion to the *Shema*, which is cited in 12:29.

¹¹⁷ E.g., Hofius, “βλάσφημία,” 1:221; Collins, “Blasphemy,” 398; contra, e.g., D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 106.

¹¹⁸ L. W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God: Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 166 and the literature cited. This chapter of the book originally appeared as an article, “Early Jewish Opposition to Jesus-Devotion,” *JTS* 50 (1999): 35-58.

¹¹⁹ So also Davis, “Paradox,” 8-9: “From beginning to end, the conflict between Jesus and the authorities is centred upon the Markan understanding of what is involved in blasphemy: the claim to transcend the radical distinction between the divine and the human.” Similarly, Meier, “Plucking,” 567. Cf. also D. Lüthmann, “Die Pharisäer und die Schriftgelehrten im Markusevangelium,” *ZNW* 78

the blasphemy accusation also primarily has to do with the status Christians attributed to Jesus (John 10:30-36; cf. also John 5:18).¹²⁰ This also means that the views of Dunn and Casey, that it is only in John we find evidence of Jewish reactions against a christology which in their view was blasphemous and violating the unique status of God, cannot be maintained.¹²¹ Mark has, indeed, constructed his Gospel in such a way that there should be no doubt why Jesus' opponents found him guilty of blasphemy. Both sides in the conflict agree that Jesus in various ways claimed divine status; they disagree, however, as to whether this had divine sanction and whether such a view of Jesus could be accommodated within the framework of Jewish monotheism.¹²²

There is one more piece of evidence to consider. Each time Jesus is accused of blasphemy, a description of how Jesus' opponents blaspheme or risk blaspheming follows shortly afterwards (3:28-29; 15:29).¹²³ As Bock has pointed out, there seems to be a "battle of the blasphemies" going on in Mark.¹²⁴ In the first passage, Jesus warns that those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. Since this warning comes in response to the accusation of Jesus that he casts out demons by Beelzebul or an unclean Spirit (3:22; 3:30), there must be a close connection between the risk of blaspheming and a proper response to Jesus. This is clearly the case in 15:29 where some of those who passed by the cross are said to "blaspheme" him. Given the parallel usage of the verbs ἐμπαίζειν and ὀνειδίζειν in the immediate context (15:29-32), the primary meaning of βλασφημεῖν is most likely "insult,"¹²⁵ but Mark probably also wished to signal to his readers that the one who was accused of blasphemy is in reality the one who is blasphemed.¹²⁶ According to Mark's overall

(1987): 169-185, who notes that the conflict with the *scribes* (in contrast to the Pharisees) from beginning to end is about christology (182-85).

¹²⁰ Anderson, "Trial," 117-18. Note the similarities between Mark 2:1-12 and John 5. If John knew and used Mark we have early evidence for how Mark was read.

¹²¹ E.g., Dunn, *Partings*, 271-300; M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), e.g., 37-38, 136-38, 158-59. For evidence of Jewish opposition to a "blasphemous" christology in the NT outside John, see Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 152-78. Cf. also G. Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* (BZNW 123; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 338.

¹²² Cf. Anderson, "Trial," 117.

¹²³ In the remaining instance of the term, which appears in the list of vices in 7:22, the meaning is probably something like "slander."

¹²⁴ Bock, *Blasphemy*, 188-89; similarly Hurtado, *Mark*, 255.

¹²⁵ Collins, "Blasphemy," 396.

¹²⁶ Juel, *Temple*, 103.

usage of the terminology, then, one is at risk to commit blasphemy against God, the Holy Spirit, and even Jesus, and in each case this is closely related to how one responds to Jesus and his claims.

3.5. Conclusion

The story about Jesus and the lame man in Mark 2 gives abundant evidence for a close association of Jesus with the God of Israel. 1) The larger context of Jesus' saying in 2:5 shows that Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins, not merely announces God's forgiveness. 2) Mark 2:7, the OT, and the early Jewish literature maintain that pardoning of sins committed against God is a divine prerogative. By forgiving the lame man's sins, Jesus participates in a divine prerogative reserved for Israel's God. 3) The passage shows also that Jesus shares the divine attribute of seeing the thoughts of a human heart. 4) The healing and forgiveness bestowed to a paralytic is probably seen by Mark as a fulfilment of promises in the OT associated with YHWH's coming to save (Isa 35:4-6). 5) The blasphemy accusation is part of a larger pattern in Mark, which indicates that Jesus' critics also agree that Jesus in various ways claimed a divine status. In their view, these claims were blasphemous and threatening God's uniqueness. Mark, on the other hand, states that everything Jesus does for the paralytic is to the glory of God (2:12; cf. Phil 2:6-11). Mark can maintain the confession of the *Shema* (cf. 12:29, 32) and that God alone forgives sins, and at the same time ascribe divine forgiveness to Jesus. In some mysterious way, then, Jesus is found on the divine side of the distinction between God and the creation, closely identified with the God of Israel, yet distinct from him.

4. Jesus' Calming of the Storm

4.1. Introduction

Mark's account of Jesus stilling the wind and the raging sea by means of his own word is generally regarded as reflecting OT descriptions of YHWH's sovereign authority over wind and sea, and thereby ascribing a divine act to Jesus.¹ There is less agreement, however, when it comes to the question of the christological implications of the story: is Jesus, in Mark's view, acting in the role of Israel's God, perhaps even being his visible manifestation on earth, or is he merely portraying Jesus as man uniquely endowed with divine power? How is the audience expected to respond to the question, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey?" with which the episode ends.

Recent interpreters of this passage generally argue that Mark 4:35-41 should be read against the background of the OT and a Jewish worldview. This, however, does not mean that the non-Jewish literature is irrelevant.² Stories about sailors who were saved from severe storms were rather common in the ancient world, and readers with a non-Jewish background would naturally bring their pre-Christian perceptions to the text. To determine the significance of Mark 4:35-41, we shall first survey what Jewish and Hellenistic texts say on the issue.

4.2. Authority over Wind and Sea in the Old Testament

The OT is unambiguous. There is only one whom sea and wind obey: the God of Israel.³ Numerous passages attest to the sovereign lordship of YHWH over water and

¹ This passage and the sea walking account seem to be the only passages in Mark where nearly all interpreters agree that Jesus takes on a divine prerogative. I have not been able to find any arguments to the contrary. Even Lührmann, who is usually very cautious in this regard, points out this fact (*Markus*, 97).

² In my view, A. Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941), goes too far when he says: "Like the healing stories, they [the nature miracles] can be understood *only* against the background of the Old Testament and not in the light of non-biblical wonder stories" (90; italics mine).

³ See e.g., the surveys in P. J. Achtemeier, "Person and Deed: Jesus and the Storm-Tossed Sea," *Int* 16 (1962) 169-76; Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 65-71; R. Kratz, *Rettungswunder: Motiv-, traditions- und formkritische Aufarbeitung einer biblischen Gattung* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979), 27-78; G. Kittel, "'Wer ist der?' Markus 4.35-41 und der mehrfache Sinn der Schrift," in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums* (ed. C. Landmesser, H.-J. Eckstein, and H. Lichtenberger; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 519-42, esp. 523-30; W. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999), 138-42.

storms. These can be divided into three categories. First, there are those passages which describe God as the creator of the sea,⁴ and the one who subdued primordial watery chaos and its personification, the sea dragon (variously called Rahab or Leviathan) at the creation.⁵ A repeated theme in these passages is that YHWH's power over the chaotic sea demonstrates his sovereign lordship. For example, Ps 89:8-10:

YHWH God of hosts, *who is mighty as you are*, YHWH, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

It is precisely as the ruler of the sea that Israel's God is above all other gods. God's people can therefore in times of distress and oppression appeal to this distinguished prerogative of YHWH: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of YHWH; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?" (Isa 51:9; cf. Ps 74:10-15). His power over the sea, guarantees his ability to intervene and save Israel and defeat all their enemies. In a different context, Israel is reminded that they should fear and tremble before God, precisely because he has placed barriers for the sea (Jer 5:22).

A second category of passages refers to God as saviour from the sea and the present ruler over the sea. This was demonstrated at the great Flood (Gen 8:1) and *par excellence* at the Exodus.⁶ Some passages link this redemptive act of God with his subdual of the sea at creation.⁷ But YHWH's power over the sea is not only a past reality. God is now stirring up the sea⁸ and stilling it.⁹ God has created the sea and is the present sovereign ruler over it.¹⁰ The faith of Israel can therefore declare that "the sea is his" (Ps 95:5).

⁴ Gen 1:1-10; Pss 95:5; 146:6; Prov 8:27-31; Jon 1:9.

⁵ Job 26:11-12; 38:8-11; Pss 33:7; 74:12-15; 89:8-10; 104:3-9; Isa 51:9-10; Jer 5:22. For this motif in Babylonian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian texts, see esp. Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 14-27.

⁶ Exod 14:21-31; Josh 24:7; Ps 66:6; 77:15-16; 106:9; 114:3, 5.

⁷ Ps 74:10-15; Isa 51:9-10.

⁸ Pss 29:3-9; 77:17-20; 107:25; Jer 31:35; Jonah 1:4.

⁹ Pss 65:7-8; 89:9; 107: 29; Isa 50:2; Jonah 1:12-16; Nah 1:4; Job 7:12 (by implication).

¹⁰ Ps 135:6; Amos 5:8; 9:6.

Closely related to the second category are the passages, primarily in the Psalms, in which water and storms function as metaphors for the utter distress of the individual or the nation:

Let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me. (Ps 69:14-15)¹¹

Some passages bring out a complete trust in God's power to protect or save even when being in the middle of the roaring waters:

By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas ... who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. (Ps 65:5-8; cf. Ps 46:1-3; Isa 43:2)

There are also a number of passages which attest to YHWH's control of the winds, often in combination with the motif of sea and water, as in Ps 147:18: "he makes his wind blow and the waters flow."¹²

Thus, according to the Hebrew Bible, it is a prerogative of the God of Israel to control the wind and the sea. But it is more than that. Precisely this ability demonstrates that YHWH is the sovereign ruler over all things, above all gods, that YHWH is the only true God. So strong was this conviction that when the Israelites faced the most severe difficulties, they reminded God of his power over the sea, which he demonstrated at the creation and the Exodus (e.g., Ps 74:10-15; Isa 51:9-10).

Two OT passages have been identified as a particularly important background for Mark 4:35-41: Jonah 1 and Ps 107:23-32. Goppelt argued for a Jonah typology and many interpreters have followed him.¹³ The general similarity between the two stories,¹⁴ as well as similarities in vocabulary,¹⁵ seem to suggest that the

¹¹ Cf. Pss 18:16; 42:7-8; 69:1-2; 124:4-5; Jonah 2:2-6.

¹² Cf. Gen 8:1; Job 28:25; Ps 107:25-30; Prov 30:4; Amos 4:13; Nah 1:3.

¹³ L. Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1939), 84-86. The theme is stressed by e.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 269; Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 197-219; J. P. Meier *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:931-32; Marcus, *Mark*, 337.

¹⁴ According to Marcus, there are six similarities between this story and the Jonah story: 1) Departure of the boat; 2) A violent storm at the sea; 3) A sleeping main character; 4) Badly frightened sailors; 5) A miraculous stilling related to the main character; 6) A marvelling response by the sailors (*Mark*, 337).

Evangelist had the Jonah story in view. Like Jonah, Jesus is peacefully asleep in the boat while the sailors/the experienced fishermen are scared to death in face of the storm. As in the Jonah story the captain wakes up Jonah and rebukes him with a rhetorical question, so the disciples wake up Jesus and ask him if he does not care about them. In both stories the reaction at the cessation of the storm is the same; the fear after the storm is greater than in the midst of it. These similarities, however, do not necessarily imply a Jonah typology.¹⁶ Jesus is not a disobedient prophet who is fleeing from YHWH, and he does not avert the storm by being thrown in the water. Instead, Jesus himself averts the storm by two words of command. If a comparison of the two figures is in view, it is rather one of contrast, and the point is obviously Jesus' superiority over Jonah.¹⁷

This observation has led scholars to argue that another OT text must be in view in addition to Jonah 1, namely Ps 107:32-33:¹⁸

He [YHWH] commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.

They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight;

they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.

Then they cried to YHWH in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

¹⁵ Jonah 1:4 (LXX)/Mark 4:37: τό πλοῖον; 1:5: ἐκάθειπεν/4:38: ἦν [...] καθεύδων; 1:6: ἀπολώμεθα/4:38: ἀπολλύμεθα; 1:11: κοπάσει/4:39: ἐκόπασεν; 1:16: ἐφοβήθησαν...φόβῳ μεγάλῳ/4:41: ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν.

¹⁶ Some interpreters doubt a close connection between the Jonah story and Mark 4:35-41. Gundry (*Mark*, 246), concerned to undermine that argument by Pesch (*Markus*, 1:271) that the storm-stilling episode is an elaboration of the Jonah story, argues that parallels put forward are due to the nature of the story, and the idiom "fear a great fear" can be found elsewhere (1 Macc 10:8; cf. LXX Ps 52:6; Ezek 27:28). He further notes the many differences between the two stories and claims that Mark lacks a Jonah typology (only present in Q). Gundry is, however, in the end open to the possibility of "phraseological influence." Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 60, likewise doubts a literary dependence on the Jonah story. But he concludes that the story must have been known to the Christian writer and that he may have partly used it for his own formulations.

¹⁷ "Someone greater than Jonah is here." So already Goppelt, *Typos*, 85, obviously alluding to the Jesus saying in Matt 12:41/Luke 11:32. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:931, suggests that the use of the Jonah story must be meant to be paradoxical so that the fulfilment in Jesus both transcends and reverses Jonah 1.

¹⁸ Pesch suggests that Mark 4:35-41 is a free retelling of Jonah 1 by the help of Ps 107: 23-32 (*Markus* 1:276).

Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

Let them thank YHWH for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! (Ps 107:25-31)

Although the common vocabulary of Mark and Ps 107 is limited to words basic to a sea storm story (θάλασσα, πλοῖον, κύματα), there are similarities in content, both in structure and ideas.¹⁹ 1) Experience/description of the distress at sea; 2) Cry for help to God/Jesus; 3) Salvation through the stilling of the storm; 4) Reaction and response from the saved men with thanks/fear. The reaction of joy and the thankfulness in the Psalm may seem to stand in sharp contrast to the fear of the disciples, but fear of God and praise to him are often closely related in Jewish thinking.²⁰ As we shall see below, the disciples' rhetorical question in v. 41 can be viewed as praise.

These two OT passages affirm YHWH's sovereign rule of the sea. Sailors in peril should therefore turn to the God of Israel. This idea is particularly prominent in the Jonah story. Jonah's gentile shipmates pray in vain to their gods (Jonah 1:5). The storm ceases only when they turn to YHWH and follows the instruction of YHWH's prophet. As a result, they begin to fear Israel's God (Jonah 1:14-16). The point is obviously that YHWH's manifestation of his sovereign rule over the sea demonstrates his sovereignty over all other gods.

4.3. Authority over Wind and Sea in Early Jewish Literature

The same themes that are present in the OT appear also in the early Jewish literature. Sir 43:23-26 announces the creation of the sea by God. *1 En.* 101:4-9 summarizes several biblical themes: God made the sea; he stirs up storms and calms them down. The example of sailors who fear the sea and its Lord (cf. Ps 107) is used to teach sinners that they should fear the Most High (cf. Jer 5:22).

The hymns in the *Hodayot* Scroll from Qumran resemble the biblical Psalms in many ways.²¹ This is also true when it comes to the sea motif. As in the biblical

¹⁹ For a detailed comparison and discussion, see R. Glöckner, *Neutestamentlichen Wundergeschichten und das Lob der Wundertaten Gottes in den Psalmen* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1983), 63-67. Cf. also R. Meye, "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon' for Interpreting the Miracle Stories of Mark 4.35-8.26," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. R. A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 1-13. According to Donahue and Harrington, Mark virtually paraphrases Ps 107:23-32 (*Mark*, 160-61).

²⁰ Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 66.

²¹ G. Vermes, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: SCM, 1999), 45.

Psalms, the creation of the sea by God is affirmed (1QH 9:10-15), and the image of a ship in a sea storm is used metaphorically to describe difficulties and distress of the hymn writer (1QH 11:1-18; 14:22-24; 15:4-5).²² For example, the writer of 1QH 14:22-24 laments:

[I am] like a sailor in a ship in the raging sea, its waves and torrents roar over me, a whirlwind [without a] lull for taking breath, without tracks which direct the path over the surface of the sea. The deep thunders at my sigh, [my soul nears] the gates of death.²³

The sailor in peril is wonderfully rescued by God and, shifting metaphor, he compares himself to one entering a fortified city (14:25). As in several Psalms, the writer is appealing for divine intervention. His state of danger is such that only God can save him.

A symbolically loaded story of a sea storm is found in *T. Naph.* 6. Naphtali tells how he sees his father Jacob, his eleven brothers and himself standing by the sea at Jamnia when a ship without sailor and pilot, called “The Ship of Jacob” (apparently a symbol for Israel), is sailing past. Jacob orders his sons to get into the boat. But a violent tempest arises, and Jacob, who steers the boat, is snatched away by the wind. The boat is filled up with water and breaks apart, and the twelve brothers are scattered about and dispersed “even to the outer limits.” When Levi prays to the Lord, however, the storm ceases. The boat somehow reaches land and the twelve brothers are reunited with their father. The story has several interesting implications, but for our present purposes it is sufficient to note that the storm is stilled after Levi has interceded with the Lord. Stilling of sea storms and salvation of seamen in peril is here as elsewhere attributed to God alone.

Two passages from the rabbinic material which both in different ways reflect the Jonah story should be mentioned as well. It is told about Rabbi Gamaliel that a sea storm arose while he was on a ship. He assumes the storm is a punishment for his treatment of another rabbi. When he prays to God, however, explaining that what he

²² For a detailed discussion of these texts including allusions to various OT passages, see J. P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:15b-21* (AnBib 87; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 22-30.

²³ Cited after F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 341.

did was done to God's glory and not his own, the storm ceases.²⁴ The other story is about a Jewish boy:

Rabbi Tanhuma said: It happened that a pagan ship made a voyage on the Great Sea [the Mediterranean] and on it was a Jewish child. While at sea a great storm on the sea arose against them, and then each one stood and began to raise his hands and call out to his god. But the child did nothing. Seeing that he did nothing they said to the Jewish boy, "My son, stand up! Call on your god! For we have heard that he answers you, if you cry to him and he is strong." Thereupon the child stood up and with his whole heart he cried [to God] and the sea was silent.²⁵

The story goes on to tell how the Gentiles recognize the superiority of the god of the boy and express their unhappiness about the inability of their own gods. As in the Jonah story, the supreme power of the God of Israel comes to expression in his sovereign authority over wind and sea. The motif is obviously employed to demonstrate the superiority of Israel's God over pagan gods.²⁶

The final example is from 2 Macc 9:8. This passage, which often is overlooked in surveys of the Jewish evidence,²⁷ is of great importance for the interpretation of Mark 4:35-41. The passage narrates the final days of Antiochus Epiphanes' life and what the writer seems to view as a fitting end for the king. Contrasting the previous claims of Antiochus with his present state, the author writes:

Thus he who had just been thinking that he could command the waves of the sea [τῆς θαλάσσης κύμασιν ἐπιτάσσειν], in his superhuman arrogance, and imaging that he could weigh the high mountains in a

²⁴ b. B. Meṣ 59b, cited in Str-B 1:489-90. P. Fiebig, *Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihres Verhältnisses zum Neuen Testament bearbeitet: Ein Beitrag zum Streit um die "Christusmythe"* (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1911), 35, overlooks the crucial difference between Rabbi Gamaliel who prays to God and Jesus who stills the storm himself, when he states: "Man traute eben Jesu genau zu, was die damaligen Juden ihren Rabbinen zutrauten."

²⁵ y. Ber. 9.13b; cited after Cotter, *Sourcebook*, 140.

²⁶ So Fiebig, *Wundergeschichten*, 62. Although Fiebig notices it, he downplays the crucial difference between Jesus' powerful word and the boy's prayer to God. A later version of the story, in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 28.5.2, actually ascribes the salvation of the ship to Elijah, who appears to the boy promising to save the ship under the condition he does Elijah a favour. *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* is usually dated 5th-6th century CE. See G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. and ed. M. Bockmuehl; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 295-96.

²⁷ The passage is sometimes appealed to as evidence for a Greco-Roman attribution of control of the sea to rulers. It must be remembered, however, that this passage is a *Jewish* portrait of an archenemy of the Jewish people.

balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. (2 Macc 9:8)

“The god made manifest”²⁸ is in this passage said to have claimed two divine prerogatives which demonstrate the sovereignty of Israel’s God: authority over the sea²⁹ and ability to weigh the mountains. The latter is not only humanly impossible but probably also an allusion to the praise of YHWH in Isa 40:12: “Who has ... weighed the mountains in scales ... ?”³⁰ That the author wished to convey the idea that the king imagined himself to be divine is confirmed by what follows.³¹ Verse 10 adds another human impossibility to Antiochus’ arrogance, the ability to touch the stars of heaven,³² and two verses later, the king, now described as broken in spirit, confesses: “It is right to be subject to God, and no mortal should think that he is *equal to God*” (9:12). Antiochus’ ultimate sin was thus, in the view of the author, to equate himself with God.³³ When Antiochus’ life is summed up he is, accordingly, called both murderer and *blasphemer* (9:28) implying he had committed the worst sins possible against man (ἀνδροφόνος) and God.³⁴ 2 Maccabees thus gives evidence that Jews regarded the claim to have ability to command the waves of the sea as a claim to divinity, which in their view was to make oneself equal to God, a blasphemous claim (cf. John 10:33).³⁵

²⁸ The author makes fun of this epithet at several places in the present chapter (9:7, 8, 11).

²⁹ This may allude to a large number of passages in the OT, but Pss 65:7; 89:9; 107:29 are particular close.

³⁰ See J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 169-70; D. R. Schwartz, “Why did Antiochus Have to Fall (II Maccabees 9:7)?,” in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism* (ed. L. LiDonnici and A. Lieber; JSJSup 119; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 257-65, 263. Schwartz, however, fails to notice the allusion to YHWH’s sovereign authority over the sea in the OT. Instead, he argues that this is a reference to 5:21, which mentions that Antiochus imagined himself to be able to walk on the sea and sail on land, an idea which Schwartz argues points to Herodotus’ description of Xerxes (on this, see further 6.2). T. Africa, “Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History,” *CIA* 1 (1982):1-17, 9, notes that both powers are attributes of YHWH (with ref. to Ps 65:7; Isa 40:12), but minimizes their significance and suggests in light of 5:21 that the author had Xerxes in mind.

³¹ This seems also to be implied by the characterization of the king’s arrogance as “superhuman” (ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἀλαζονείαν).

³² Cf. Job 38:31. D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 358, suggests an allusion to Isa 14:13.

³³ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 357.

³⁴ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 365.

³⁵ Later, Mekilta Shirta 8 interprets “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?” (Exod 15:11) as “Who is like you among those who call themselves divine?” and refers to four biblical rulers who claimed divinity: Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and the prince of Tyre. The evidence provided for Pharaoh’s imagined divinity is his rule over the river (Ezek 29:3: “My Nile is my own; I

Although some of texts cited above postdate Mark, the pattern is consistent and confirms what we found in the OT. Authority over wind and sea is a divine prerogative, indeed an attribute which demonstrates YHWH's absolute sovereignty over all the creation. To ascribe human beings such powers would be to equate them with God himself (so clearly 2 Maccabees, but also implied in the passages in which this attribute is used to demonstrate YHWH's superiority over other gods). Human beings are helpless against the powers of the sea, but God intervenes at the prayers of his people.³⁶

4.4. Authority over Wind and Sea in Greco-Roman Literature

It is often noted that a great variety of figures, gods, divine men, kings, priests, philosophers, and magicians, were regarded as capable of controlling wind and sea in the Hellenistic literature.³⁷ But it is seldom mentioned that in most of these cases, these figures, in one way or another, are either associated with divinity or dependant on a deity. A closer examination of many passages shows that Hellenistic thinking does not differ so much from Judaism with regard to the significance of this power.³⁸

Authority over wind and water was of course attributed to those gods of the Olympic pantheon particularly associated with the sea, Poseidon/Neptune and Aphrodite/Venus.³⁹ In the Hellenistic period, four other deities or groups of deities

made it for myself"). See J. Goldin, *The Song at the Sea: Being a Commentary on a Commentary in Two Parts* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1971), 193-94, who regards this as polemic against the cult of emperor worship.

³⁶ Marcus' suggestion that this divine attribute was attributed to the Messiah in the Qumran fragment 4Q521 ("The heavens and the earth will obey his Messiah") is questionable (*Mark*, 340, based on the translation of Eisenman and Wise). The meaning and significance of the text is disputed and it is not clear whether it refers to one or several "anointed one/s" and consequently whether it at all refers to a messiah. Furthermore, the miracles which are described later in the text are clearly attributed to God. See further 5.2. *Pesiq. R.* 36:1, which with reference to Ps 89:25 states that the Messiah will control the flow of the sea and rivers (probably implying a new exodus), is late, from 4th-7th century. See *Pesikta Rabbati* (2 vols.; transl. W. G. Braude; Yale Judaica Series 18; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 20-26, esp. 23. The passage also attributes preexistence (cf. *Pesiq. R.* 33:6) and suffering for sins to the Messiah.

³⁷ H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (NovTSup 9; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 641. For surveys and texts of the Greco-Roman literature, see e.g., van der Loos, *Miracles*, 641-44; K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (SANT 23; München: Kösel-Verlag, 1970), 97; Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 79-106; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 193-94; Cotter, *Sourcebook*, 131-148.

³⁸ A. Yarbro Collins, "Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45-52)" in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competitions in the New Testament World*, ed. L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici, A. Standhartinger (Leiden: Brill, 1994): 207-27, 214, notes that "Jewish, Greek, and Roman tradition shared the notion of a deity controlling wind and sea."

³⁹ See texts in Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 79-94; Cotter, *Sourcebook*, 132-37.

came to be attributed control of the sea and regarded as appropriate recipients of prayers from sailors in distress: the Dioscuri,⁴⁰ the Samothrace deities,⁴¹ Isis, and Serapis. The hero Orpheus, who was known for his ability to “beguile the sea by his singing,”⁴² should probably be included in this category as well, as he was a son of Zeus.

Some philosophers of the Pythagorean School were ascribed powers over nature.⁴³ Iamblicus notes the following about Pythagoras himself:

And ten thousand other incidents more *divine* and wonderful than these are related regularly and consistently about the man: infallible predictions of earthquakes, speedy preventions of plagues and violent winds, immediate cessations of hailstorms, and *calmings of river and sea waves* for easy passage of his disciples.⁴⁴

Iamblicus explicitly points out that these deeds belong to the *divine* sphere. In performing them Pythagoras takes on what was regarded as prerogatives of the gods. This probably holds true for the stories about the later Pythagorean philosopher Empedocles as well.⁴⁵ In another place, which describes Pythagoras’ journey on a ship, it is recounted how the sailors afterwards, surprised that the journey proceeded without interruptions, considered the possibility that some deity had been on board.⁴⁶ The Pythagorean philosophers’ powers over nature apparently demonstrated that they were more than ordinary humans, “divine philosophers.”⁴⁷ Apollonius of Tyana, who is presented as a Pythagorean philosopher by Philostratus, was also known as a

⁴⁰ The note in Acts 28:11 that Paul leaves Malta on ship with the Dioscuri as a figurehead must be ironic in the light of YHWH’s salvation from the peril recounted a few verses earlier.

⁴¹ These appear in the Hellenistic story which, according to Blackburn (*Theios Anēr*, 142, n. 219), shows most similarities with Mark 4:35-41, Didorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 4.43.1-2: “But there came on a great storm and the chieftains had given up hope of being saved, when Orpheus, they say, who was the only one on shipboard who had ever been initiated in the mysteries of the deities of Samothrace, offered to these deities the prayers for their salvation. And immediately the wind died down and two stars fell over the heads of the Dioscuri, and the whole company was amazed at the marvel which had taken place and concluded that they had been rescued from their perils by an act of Providence of the gods” (Oldfather, LCL).

⁴² Philostratus, *Imagines* 2.15.1 (Fairbanks, LCL).

⁴³ It should be noted that this and the following sources (Iamblichus, Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus) are late (3rd century CE), and it is therefore difficult to say to what extent they actually reflect a first century understanding of the Pythagorean school. Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, for example, may have been shaped in response to the Gospels. See 10.2.1 n. 8.

⁴⁴ Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 28 (italics mine; trans. Dillon and Hershboll).

⁴⁵ See Cotter, *Sourcebook*, 144-45, citing Diogenes Laertius and Iamblichus.

⁴⁶ *Life of Pythagoras* 3.

⁴⁷ Cf. Kertelge, *Wunder Jesu*, 97.

master of the tempest. Philostratus recounts an episode in which people wished to share a voyage with Apollonius because it was autumn and the sea was not to be trusted.⁴⁸

Several famous rulers were associated with powers over sea and wind. 2 Macc 9:8 is usually mentioned in this context. As we saw in our earlier discussion of the passage, the claim to command the waves of the sea implies a claim to divine status. Some passages which ascribe powers over nature to rulers of the Hellenistic era must therefore be seen in the light of their deification. So, for example, there is the often mentioned reference to Caligula (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 59.28.6) which describes his attempts to overcome thunderstorms by throwing a javelin at a rock. It appears in a context in which Caligula's pretention to divinity is narrated.⁴⁹ On the other hand, other stories seem to demonstrate, rather than deification, the extraordinary good fortune of the ruler. Several writers mention an episode in which a violent storm hits a ship with Julius Caesar aboard. The sailors want to return to the harbour, but Caesar encourages them by simply pointing to his own presence. In Lucan's version of the story, Caesar points out that the gods have never deserted him, that Fortune favours him.⁵⁰ In this case, however, the ship is forced to return. Strelan notes that Caesar, in the end, is helpless and dependant on the intentions of Fate.⁵¹ More notable in this regard is perhaps Philo's choice of the metaphor of storm stilling, normally used for God in the Jewish context, for Augustus' accomplishment of Pax Romana: "This is the Caesar who calmed the torrential storms on every side..."⁵²

⁴⁸ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.13.5-13. Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 64, notes that Apollonius once stopped a storm by means of magic.

⁴⁹ Dio Cassius refers to Caligula as "god" and "Zeus." Elsewhere (59.17.11) he states that Caligula declared himself to be stronger than Neptune. Cf. also Philo's comment on Caligula: "But Gaius grew beside himself with vanity, not only saying but thinking he was God" (*Embassy* 162; Colson, LCL), which is described at length in *Embassy* 74-113. For a helpful overview of Caligula's relationship with the Jews, see M. Hengel and A.-M. Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2007), 84-87.

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion, see R. Strelan, "A Greater Than Caesar: Storm Stories in Lucan and Mark," *ZNW* 91 (2000): 166-79.

⁵¹ Strelan, "Caesar," 178. Commenting on similar stories about Alexander the Great and other Hellenistic rulers, Strelan writes: "It was not prayers and sacrifices that helped, but simply divine favour" (174).

⁵² Philo, *Embassy* 145.

Finally, it should be noted that stories in which magic was used to control wind and sea were not uncommon in the ancient world.⁵³ These confirm, however, the general understanding that human beings did not dispose over nature. Magic was a way to contact the gods and influence them,⁵⁴ thus not essentially different from prayers and sacrifices.

To sum up, the Greco-Roman world, much like the Jewish/biblical tradition associated power over water and wind with the divine sphere. Such powers were not normally ascribed to humans, and when they were, they often suggested that the person in some way was divine. Some figures were regarded as a good insurance against storms (Apollonius of Tyana) or regarded themselves to be (Caesar), but sailors in distress would normally call upon the gods associated with the sea to avert a storm.⁵⁵ Thus, although a variety of figures are often pointed out as possessors of a supernatural power over nature, a closer examination shows that the power actually belongs to a god or that the person in question was regarded as divine. The crucial difference from Judaism is then not what the power signifies but a less strict concept of the divine and the number of deities. It was against this pagan praxis of ascribing powers over sea and wind to a variety of gods, semi-gods, and divine human beings, that the Jews claimed that their God was the only one who actually had such power. The pagans cried in vain to their gods (Jonah 1; *b. B. Meš* 59b) and God would in the end punish human claims to such power (1 Macc 9:8). It was only one whom wind and sea obeyed, YHWH, the God of Israel.

4.5. Jesus' Authority over Wind and Sea

Jesus' storm-stilling miracle⁵⁶ follows immediately upon the parable section in Mark 4. Jesus has been teaching all day when he in the evening orders his disciples to join him and go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee⁵⁷ in a boat:

⁵³ See the references in B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 273.

⁵⁴ Cf. H.-D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das neue Testament* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 166. Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 95, notes that several heroes used magic to influence the weather.

⁵⁵ Betz, *Lukian*, 173, notes in his discussion of divine men's power over the sea that, "Die wunderbare Errettung aus Seenot selbst wird den Göttern zugeschrieben, und zwar vor allen den Dioskuren." See also Pesch, *Markus*, 273-74 and cf. R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition* (7th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 253: "Eine einzelne Wundergeschichte, in der die Stillung des Sturmes auf einen θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, eine Heilandgestalt, übertragen wäre, ist mir nicht bekannt."

⁵⁶ Many exegetes characterize the storm-stilling account as an epiphany or sea-rescue epiphany. For a detailed and not always convincing argumentation, see Heil, *Walking*, 127-31. For critical assessment,

And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Mark 4:37-41

One thing in particular stands out about this story when compared to the most similar stories surveyed above (e.g., Jonah 1; *T. Naph.* 6; *y. Ber.* 9.13b; Didorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 4.43.1-2); the miracle is accomplished by Jesus himself. Jesus does not pray to God,⁵⁸ he does not invoke God's name, nor does he use any magical formulas.⁵⁹ He simply speaks to the wind and the sea, and the storm immediately ceases.⁶⁰ He does what YHWH alone can do; he demonstrates a unique, divine, and sovereign power over the creation; he acts in the role of YHWH himself.⁶¹

Who is Jesus then? The disciples' bewildered question asks for the identity of Jesus.⁶² While most scholars, as already noted, agree that Jesus does what only God

see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:928-29. The main reason for seeing this as some kind of epiphany is the reaction of the disciples, a typical human response to epiphanies.

⁵⁷ On the significance of the Sea of Galilee in Mark, see E. S. Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," *JBL* 103 (1984): 363-77.

⁵⁸ Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:273: "In jüdischen Seerettungserzählungen [werden] nur Gebetshörungen geschildert."

⁵⁹ Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 65.

⁶⁰ The same word, ἐκόπασεν, is used in Gen 8:1; Jonah 1:11-12.

⁶¹ A non-Jewish Hellenist would perhaps understand Jesus as a Neptune or the Dioscuri deities. Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:276: "Jesus ist nicht nur mehr als Jona, sondern auch mehr als die Hellenistischen Thaumaturgen. Er rückt in die Rolle einer Schutzgottheit ein, mehr; in Jahwes Rolle." B. M. F. van Iersel and A. J. M. Linmans, "The Storm on the Lake: Mk iv 35-41 and Mt viii 18-27 in the light of Form Criticism, "Redaktionsgeschichte" and Structural Analysis," in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* 2 (ed. T. Baarda, A. F. J. Klijn, W. C. Van Unnik; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 17-48, come to the same conclusion using structural analysis: "In Mk iv 35-41 the code of divine actions of Yahweh becomes the code of divine actions of Jesus" (32).

⁶² This question tells against the van Iersel and Linman reading of the pericope as primarily concerned with the community of Mark than christology ("Storm," 22-23; cf. Guelich, *Mark*, 261). Though some scholars see this question as further evidence for the disciples' failed discipleship, nothing in the pericope suggests that. The question is rather to be seen as rhetorical and directed to the readers who must answer it. It is not, as is sometimes maintained, answered by the demon possessed man in the following pericope (5:7; Gundry, *Mark*, 241), nor by Peter (8:29), not even the Roman centurion at the cross (15:39; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 159), but as Guelich puts it, "It forces the reader to respond in view of the OT setting of the story as well as the reader's knowledge of the larger story" (*Mark*, 270); similarly P. Müller, "Wer ist dieser?" *Jesus im Markusevangelium: Markus als Erzähler, Verkündiger und Lehrer* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 27; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1995), 40-46; France, *Mark*, 225.

or divine beings can do, there are a variety of proposals when it comes to the implications of this fact. Dibelius famously suggested that the question of the disciples “presupposes that the hearers or readers themselves give the answer that he who commands the waves is the visible epiphany of God on earth.”⁶³ Others assert that the *power* of God is manifested in Jesus, for example Schenke: “Jesus steht ... nicht in Konkurrenz zum Gott Israels, sondern handelt an seiner Statt, als sein ‘Sohn,’ mit seiner göttlichen Macht und Stärke ausgerüstet.”⁶⁴ For Heil, Jesus is not a manifestation of God himself; the storm stilling account is rather a manifestation of God’s will to save his people through his son.⁶⁵ Lührmann also objects to an identification of Jesus with the God of Israel: Jesus “is the one who is justified by God in his acts.”⁶⁶ Others are content to note that Jesus does what only God can do or that Jesus has the authority of YHWH,⁶⁷ without any further specifications.

Though a more precise determination of Mark’s view of Jesus’ relationship to God can only be undertaken after all data have been surveyed, there are nevertheless a number of observations that can be made on the basis of the background we have sketched above. The disciples’ question can just have one answer: there is only one whom sea and wind obey in the OT and the early Jewish literature, the God of Israel. This would suggest that Jesus somehow is the visible presence of YHWH on earth. It is simply not sufficient to say that Jesus possesses the *power* of God. There are no parallels of humans being given this power, at least not in the Jewish tradition. Furthermore, authority over stormy waters is not just any divine power. It is precisely this power which at numerous places and in different contexts demonstrates that the God of Israel is the only true God.⁶⁸ Furthermore, 2 Maccabees gives evidence that

⁶³ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 95. Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:273: “... Jesus als den, in dem Jahwe epiphan wird”; L. Schenke, “Gibt es im Markusevangelium eine Präexistenzchristologie?” *ZNW* 91 (2000), 45-71: “In der Seesturmgeschichte erscheint Jesus als ein Deus Präsens, der noch unerkannt ist” (58); Collins, *Mark*, 260: “The amazement of the disciples is intelligible in light of the cultural context and parallel texts: they have *God manifest* in the boat with them!” (italics mine). Cf. also M. Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie* (2 vols.; WUNT 2:80; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995), 2:179.

⁶⁴ Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 70; similarly e.g., Guelich, *Mark*, 269-70.

⁶⁵ Heil, *Walking*, 101-02.

⁶⁶ Lührmann, *Markus*, 97.

⁶⁷ E.g., Gnika, *Markus*, 1:196.

⁶⁸ This is observed by Lane, *Mark*, 176. It cannot be a coincidence that the first things on the list of miracles God will perform when he has taken on human flesh in the *Testament of Adam* is commanding the stormy sea and walk on it: “He will perform signs and wonders on the earth, will walk on the waves of the sea. He will rebuke the winds and they will be silenced. He will motion the

human claim to this power was a claim to *be equal* to God (2 Macc 9:8-12). It is a matter of putting oneself on a par with God, as another god. Mark's storm stilling account, moreover, goes much farther than 2 Macc 9:8. Jesus is not portrayed as arrogantly claiming a divine prerogative; he is shown to *have* this divine power, (cf. Mark 2:5-12) and is thereby – so it seems – given a status equal to God's. It could perhaps be argued that the view of 2 Maccabees was not necessarily shared by all Jews. In my view, however, 2 Macc 9:8-12 only clarifies what is inherent in the OT idea that YHWH's power over the sea demonstrates his divinity. All other gods, whether the ancient Near Eastern or the Greco-Roman, are inferior to Israel's God in this regard. Mark's portrayal of Jesus then puts him in a place where Israel's God ruled alone.

The statement which Mark 4:35-41 makes about Jesus must then, in the eyes of most Jews, have been regarded as blasphemy (cf. Mark 2:7; John 10:33). As Marcus notes, the claim made about Jesus here could have been reason for Jewish persecution of Christians.⁶⁹ But what about Christians and the Evangelist himself? Were they ready to put the man Jesus on a par with God? The citation and elaboration of the *Shema* (12:29-33) gives clear evidence that Jewish monotheism is maintained in the Gospel of Mark. It can be ruled out, therefore, that Jesus is viewed as second god beside YHWH. Jesus does not compete with God, as Schenke observes.⁷⁰ But Schenke's solution, that Jesus acts in God's place, "as his 'son,' equipped with his divine authority and power," does not fully solve the issue.⁷¹ This suggests some kind of intermediate position between God and man which non-Jews may very well have been able to conceive, but not Jews. Furthermore, it underestimates the crucial significance the Jews attributed to this power, a demonstration which makes Jesus equal to God. There is then, in my view, only one way to reconcile this exalted portrait of Jesus with Jewish monotheism, and that is to view Jesus as a visible manifestation of YHWH, somehow intrinsic to the identity of God himself. This conclusion must of course be balanced by the evidence from other passages in the Gospel. But we have here a clear example of Jesus acting in a unique

waves and they will stand still. He will open the eyes of the blind..." (*T. Adam* 3:1). For an introduction to the text and its Christian interpolations, see S. E. Robinson, *OTP* 1:989-92.

⁶⁹ Marcus, *Mark*, 334; 339.

⁷⁰ Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 70.

⁷¹ Neither does Gundry: "He is the divine man who represents the one true God" (*Mark*, 241).

role of YHWH and the closest possible linking of Jesus with the God of Israel.⁷² This seems to be confirmed by other features in the text as well. To these we now turn.

4.6. Additional Evidence for a Divine Identity in Mark 4:35-41

4.6.1. The Sleep of Jesus

Jesus' sleep in the boat in the midst of a severe storm has, of course, been compared to Jonah's sleep during similar circumstances.⁷³ But interpreters have seen further implications and two main lines of interpretation have been put forward. One sees in this description a complete trust in God.⁷⁴ Sleeping peacefully is a sign of trust in the OT.⁷⁵ Accordingly, Jesus' sleep during the storm is an example of faith to imitate contrasted with the disciples' lack of faith. This, then, for some interpreters points to the humanity of Jesus. The disciples wake up the human Jesus who then assumes the role of YHWH.⁷⁶

The other line of interpretation sees Jesus' calm sleep as an expression of his sovereignty and divine status, often motivated by the fact that Jesus will later himself still the storm.⁷⁷ Batto has demonstrated that in ancient Near Eastern myths the sleep of the creator god functions "as a statement of the deity's status as supreme ruler of heaven and earth."⁷⁸ There is no one powerful enough to disturb his sleep. Batto argues that this motif comes to expression in the OT and is used of the God of Israel. Whether YHWH's sleep expresses his divine sovereignty or not, it is at least clear that the motif is found in an adapted form: God's sleep is a cause for concern for his

⁷² Cf. France, *Mark*, 225: "But already the disciples, by formulating the question in terms of the obedience of wind and water [...], prepare the way for an answer which goes beyond a functional view of Jesus as the Messiah."

⁷³ Pesch, *Markus*, 1:271. Ironically, this is the only place we hear about Jesus being asleep in Mark.

⁷⁴ E.g., Taylor, *Mark*, 276; Nineham, *Mark*, 146; Marcus, *Mark*, 334; Boring, *Mark*, 146.

⁷⁵ Job 11:18-19; Pss 3:5; 4:8; Prov 3:24; cf. Matt 6:25-34.

⁷⁶ Interpreters who see a juxtaposition of Jesus' humanity and divine identity in this pericope include Lohmeyer, *Marcus*, 92; Kittel, "Wer ist der?," 534; Boring, *Mark*, 146-47.

⁷⁷ E.g., Gnilya, *Markus*, 1:195; Guelich, *Mark*, 266; Gundry, *Mark*, 239; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:1005 n. 164; Marcus, *Mark*, 338; Collins, *Mark* 260.

⁷⁸ B. F. Batto, "The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty," *Bib* 68 (1987): 153-77, 164.

people.⁷⁹ In numerous passages, particularly in the Psalms, the writer laments God's failure to act in terms of sleep:⁸⁰

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? ... Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love! (Ps 44:23-26)

It is notable that the motif is also present in Isa 51:9-10, one of the passages which depicts God's rule over water chaos: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago" (Isa 51:9). The writer then goes on to remind God of his omnipotence, demonstrated in his defeat of Rahab and at the Exodus. This passage, not unlike Mark, combines the motif of sovereignty with seeming indifference.

In the light of the significance of the motif of sleep in Near Eastern thinking, the correspondence between OT passages expressing complaints about God being asleep and the action and complaint of the disciples that follows,⁸¹ and the fact that Jesus arouses and acts in the role of God, it seems possible that Jesus' calm sleep in the midst of a life threatening storm also points to his sovereign authority and likens him to God.⁸²

4.6.2. The Action of the Disciples

Unlike the captain in the Jonah story (Jonah 1:6), the disciples do not awake Jesus to pray to God for them. Rather, more like the distressed sailors' cry to YHWH in Ps 107:28, they turn to Jesus: "Teacher,⁸³ do you not care that we are perishing?" Their action and words imply that Jesus can do something. Their appeal, however, is not

⁷⁹ It should also be noted that in some texts the motif is inverted so that the image of YHWH as *not* sleeping or slumbering, in contrast to the gods of the surrounding people, demonstrates YHWH's absolute sovereignty over all other gods (Ps 121:4; cf. 1 Kgs 18:27).

⁸⁰ See e.g., Num 10:35; Pss 7:6; 10:11-12; 12:5; 13:1; 35:22-24; 59:4-5; 74:22; 78:65; 121:3-4; Isa 14:22; Zech 2:13. See the discussions by Batto, "Sleeping," 167-72 and Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 67-69. Glöckner also refers to Pss 3:7; 9:19; 17:13; 21:13; 35:2; 68:1; 82:1, 8.

⁸¹ This is emphasized by Glöckner (*Wundergeschichten*, 69): "Die Jünger wenden sich an ihn [Jesus], wie die alttestamentlichen Beter sich Jahwe, ihren Gott und Retter, zuwenden."

⁸² Strelan ("Greater," 176) notes that the stern where Jesus is sleeping was the place where some Romans had the custom of placing an image of the protective deity, and the place to which they directed their prayers. See also Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 210-11, 216.

⁸³ This title is used for the first time in Mark and fits nicely, as this account follows immediately upon the parable section (cf. Matt 8:25 where the storm stilling episode follows upon other miracles). It does not necessarily imply a "low" christology on the part of the disciples (cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 239; Dschulnigg, *Markus*, 150).

formulated as a direct request for help (cf. Matt 8:25), but reminds us of the reproachful prayers in the Psalms.⁸⁴ Compare, for example Ps 13:1: “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” or the similar reproach of God for being absent and not taking action to save his distressed people in combination with the motif of sleep in Psalm 44. In the words of Batto:

Just as the Israelites had called upon Yahweh to awaken and save them in their tribulation, so Jesus’ beleaguered disciples wake Jesus for help against the sea which threatened to engulf them. And like Yahweh, Jesus arises and stills the demonic sea.⁸⁵

The audience, whether they experienced persecutions in Rome or experienced the terrors of the Jewish revolt (cf. Mark 13), would probably see a reflection of their own situation in this story.⁸⁶ As did the disciples, they turned to the Lord Jesus expecting that he would be able to help in times of distress. This interpretation implies, if correct, a view of Jesus in which for the Christian believers he has assumed God’s role in the OT. They appeal to Jesus and expect him to take action on their behalf. One reason for this conviction would be that Jesus in this story demonstrates that he shares with God the sovereign authority over the wind and sea.

4.6.3. Jesus’ Rebuke of Wind and Water

It is commonly acknowledged that the storm stilling-account echoes the exorcism in Mark 1:23-27. Not only do the two verbs ἐπιτιμᾶω and φιμῶω appear in both accounts, but the reaction to the miracle is also similar (cf. 1:27 and 4:41). Mark obviously wished the readers to link the two accounts. Jesus rebukes the wind and forces the sea to be quiet, as he rebukes and silences the evil spirits (1:25; cf. 9:25). For some interpreters this implies that Mark wished to convey the idea that the storm stilling is an implicit exorcism of evil spirits behind wind and water.⁸⁷ Behind this

⁸⁴ See Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 69-71.

⁸⁵ Batto, “Sleeping,” 175. Cf. Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 70-71: “Sie ist Ruf in äusserster Bedrängnis bzw. Todesnot und steht in der Glaubens- und Gebetstradition der Psalmen, der die zwiespältige Erfahrung des Menschen geläufig ist, einerseits an Gottes Schwiegen und Abwesenheit fast zu verzweifeln und dennoch die bedrohliche Anfechtung des Glaubens in einer klagend-anklagenden, versteckten Bitte vor Gott anzusprechen.”

⁸⁶ E.g., Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 77; Markus, *Mark*, 339; Boring, *Mark*, 146.

⁸⁷ E.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 1:272; Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:195; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 144; Kollmann, *Wundertäter*, 272-73. Against this, see Gundry, *Mark*, 240; Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 2:178; France, *Mark*, 224.

account, it is claimed, is the assumption that demons are at work behind stormy wind and sea. This interpretation, however, meets the objection that not one of the passages from the Second Temple period which are appealed to suggests that the angels or spirits in charge of water and wind are evil.⁸⁸ On the contrary, the angels and spirits in these passages are servants of God who obey his commands. Furthermore, *1 Enoch*, in which many of these passages appear, states clearly that God both arouses and calms the sea (101:4-7).⁸⁹ Behind the storm stilling account is rather, then, the more general OT idea of watery chaos as an enemy of God, which we have surveyed above.⁹⁰

It is also in this same context that the primary background for the verb ἐπιτιμᾶω must be sought.⁹¹ Already in the LXX, the word is used as a technical term for God's subjugation of hostile powers by means of his word.⁹² Thus God can rebuke the creation (Job 26:11), the enemies of his people (LXX Pss 9:6; 67:31; 75:7; 79:17; 118:21), and Satan (Zech 3:2). In several cases the word is used to describe God's defeat and sovereign rule of the waters. For example, the waters fled at his rebuke at creation (Ps 103:7); God rebuked the Red Sea (Ps 105:9); God will rebuke the nations which are like roaring waters, and they will flee (Isa 17:13 [A]). ἐπιτιμᾶω is, then, not primarily exorcism terminology per se, but God's word of command that brings the hostile powers under control.⁹³ This means that the very word which in the OT is reserved for God's subjugation and stilling of powerful

⁸⁸ *Jub.* 2:2; *1 En.* 60:11-24; 61:10; 66:1-2; 69:22; *2 En.* 19:4; *4 Ezra* 6:41; *Rev* 16:5.

⁸⁹ Also in the case of Hellenistic evidence for evil spirits behind the sea storms, is the evidence slim. As in the Jewish literature, it is normally good rather than evil demons/gods who rule sea and wind. See Gundry, *Mark*, 240. Cf. van der Loos, *Miracles*, 642; Kollmann, *Wundertäter*, 273.

⁹⁰ Cf. Frenchkowski, *Offenbarung*, 2:178, n. 133: "*Bedrohlich*, wenn auch nicht eigentlich dämonisch, ist das Meer in ganzem AT" (italics Frenchkowski).

⁹¹ The verb does not occur in Hellenistic exorcism accounts. See H. C. Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," *NTS* 14 (1968): 232-46, 240-42; Gniska, *Markus*, 195.

⁹² E. Stauffer "ἐπιτιμᾶω," *TDNT* 2:624; Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 55. This is also true for the Hebrew equivalent of ἐπιτιμᾶω, רָעַל. In 21 of 28 instances of רָעַל in the Masoretic text, the meaning is to overcome the enemies of God. Eight of these refer to God's rebuke of watery chaos (2 Sam 22:16; Job 26:11; Pss 18:15; 104:7; 106:9; Isa 17:13; 50:2; Nah 1:4; cf. also *1 En.* 101: 7). See Kee, "Terminology," 235-38. Kee also surveys the Qumran literature, Philo, Josephus, Rabbinic traditions, and Greek magical papyri.

⁹³ Kee, "Terminology," 238. Although, recently published Hebrew and Aramaic incantation texts suggest that רָעַל has become almost a synonym for "to exercise, drive out" (see, G. H. Hamilton, "A New Hebrew-Aramaic Incantation Text from Galilee: 'Rebuking the Sea'," *JSS* 41 [1996]: 215-49, 230), Kee's thesis still hold for the present pericope, which is to be read in light of God's rebuke of the sea.

enemies in general and the chaotic powers of water in particular⁹⁴ is transferred to Jesus in the storm stilling account.⁹⁵ What is true for God, namely that when he speaks it happens, is true also for Jesus.⁹⁶ It is this conviction that is Mark's primary reason for linking the storm stilling account with Jesus' first exorcism; the same powerful word which is attributed to God alone in the OT is at work in both instances.⁹⁷

4.6.4. The Reaction of the Disciples

Finally, we turn to the disciples' response to Jesus' deed. Unlike the sailors in Ps 107:30 (and the synoptic parallels), they are not glad that the waters are quiet. On the contrary, "they were exceedingly afraid [ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν] and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'" The disciples are more afraid after the storm than when they were in the midst of it. This has its parallel in the Jonah story. The pagan sailors are described as afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν) before the storm, but they show a far greater fear in their encounter with the creator of heaven and earth (1:10: ἐφοβήθησαν... φόβον μέγαν; 1:16: ἐφοβήθησαν... φόβῳ μεγάλῳ). The Markan story similarly displays two kinds of fear. The first, the disciples' fear before the storm, is reproached by Jesus as a sign of lacking faith (4:40); the second, their fear after the storm, is analogous to people's reaction to the presence or deeds of God in the OT.⁹⁸ While the idiom ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν

⁹⁴ Only very seldom is it used for human reproof (e.g., Gen 37:10; Ruth 2:16; Eccl 7:5; cf. Mark 10:13).

⁹⁵ So e.g., Kee, "Terminology," 22; Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 214, 238-39; H. Giesen, "ἐπιτιμᾶω," *EDNT* 2:43: "When Jesus acts in this way, he demonstrates that he stands entirely on the side of God, who alone according to the OT (Ps 18:6 = 2 Sam 22:16; Ps 104:7, etc.) and Qumran literature (1QapGen 20:28; 1 QM 14:9-11, etc.) has the right to overcome the godless powers"; Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 72: "so zieht das Verfasser der Erzählung Jesus offenbar im Besitz göttlicher Vollmacht, wie das Alte Testament nur Jahwe selbst zuschreibt"; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 159. The use of this verb for Abraham's exorcism of an evil spirit in the Genesis Apocryphon (20:28-29) is no exception as this does not refer to the wind and sea. For a discussion of this passage, see Kee, "Terminology," 233-35.

⁹⁶ Kittel, "Wer ist der?," 532, refers in this context to Ps 33:9.

⁹⁷ Hamilton ("Incantation," 230) observes that God's power over the sea is often mentioned in magical texts and taken as model for exorcising an evil spirit. This may indeed suggest that the evidence in Mark should be read the other way around, that is, Jesus' ability to exorcise an evil spirit without any spells and without appeal to God, is grounded in his sovereign authority over the sea displayed in Mark 4:35-41 and 6:47-51.

⁹⁸ This is the view of most scholars. See e.g., Nineham, *Mark*, 147; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:273; Guelich, *Mark*, 269; Markus, *Mark*, 334; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 159. For a study of this pericope with special attention to this motif, see T. Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 128; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 108-12. For people's reaction to the presence and

by itself does not necessarily imply a reaction to a theophany or a divine intervention,⁹⁹ this is nevertheless suggested by Jesus' divine deed, the parallel in Jonah,¹⁰⁰ and the fact that the fear comes after the storm ceases.¹⁰¹ They are terrified¹⁰² because they have experienced a divine deed and, as their question implies, they have "God manifest in the boat with them!"¹⁰³ In this light the terror of the disciples is not surprising but intelligible.¹⁰⁴

Yet, there may also be another, more reverential nuance to the disciples' fear. The so called *Chorschluss* may not be a merely rhetorical question, but also an acclamation,¹⁰⁵ a hymn of praise in the tradition of the Psalms. A number of Psalms combine the motif of YHWH's power over the sea with the motif of fear and a rhetorical question which expresses God's incomparability to other powers and gods. For example, Ps 77:13-20: "Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ..."; 89:6-10: "For who in the skies can be compared to YHWH? Who among the heavenly beings is like YHWH [...] You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them"; 65:7-8: "... who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth fear at your signs."¹⁰⁶ If the cry directed to the sleeping Jesus reflects Christian

deed of God in the OT, see also O. Betz and W. Grimm, *Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu* (ANTJ 2; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977), 15-18.

⁹⁹ 1 Macc 10:8 has the exact the same wording as Mark 4:41; cf. LXX Ps 52:6; Isa 8:12; Ezek 27:28.

¹⁰⁰ Pesch, Markus 1:273; Dwyer, *Wonder*, 109: "The allusion to Jon. 1.16, where the fear is the reaction of the sailors in recognition of Yahweh, now shows Jesus as the one in whom Yahweh is manifested. In both the cases, the sudden calming of the sea terrifies those present." Dwyer notes further a possible parallel in Micah 7:15-17, where the manifestation of God's power at the New Exodus will make his people fear.

¹⁰¹ Betz and Grimm, *Wunder*, 82, treat this pericope under the category of "Theophanien oder Aufleuchtungen" in the NT. They conclude: "In v. 41 [...] kann nur Theophaniefurcht gemeint sein, den die Gefahr ist ja längst überstanden. Die Jünger erleben höchst intensiv, unmittelbar nacheinander, plötzliche Todesangst und wunderbare Rettung, spüren darin die Nähe Gottes und erschauern."

¹⁰² Dwyer, *Wonder*, 111, rightly rejects interpretations which view the disciples' reaction as negative and associated with their lack of understanding.

¹⁰³ Collins, *Mark*, 260.

¹⁰⁴ Against this interpretation it could be argued that there are cases where people react in a similar manner to God's prophets. Blackburn (*Theios Anēr*, 143) points to 1 Sam 12:18 where the Israelites "greatly fear" (ἐφοβήθησαν [...] σφόδρα) both YHWH and Samuel in response to YHWH's powerful answer to Samuel's prayer. Though this passage demonstrates that people can fear God's agent as much as God himself, two differences remain between this story and the storm stilling in Mark. First, Jesus does not pray to God, but manifests his own authority over the sea, and this is what the disciples react to. Second, Mark does not mention any fear of God alongside the fear of Jesus' deed. God is strikingly absent from this pericope.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *Mark*, 263, and esp. Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 73-76.

¹⁰⁶ See also e.g., Exod 15, Ps 18:15-17, 31-32.

cries to Jesus during persecutions, the final question may very well express their confidence in Jesus' divine ability to save from every threatening danger,¹⁰⁷ and perhaps even reflect an early Christian hymn. As the God of Israel did not abandon his people, so does Jesus not abandon his own ones.¹⁰⁸

4.7. Conclusion

The survey of literature demonstrated that whether we look at Mark's account of the storm stilling through the lens of Greco-Roman or Jewish literature, it portrays a divine Jesus. It is not only a question about a divine power which Jesus is granted, but also about his identity: "Who, then, is this...?" The passage ascribes to Jesus precisely that power which in the OT and the Jewish literature demonstrates that YHWH is the only true God, a power which it is blasphemous for a human to claim. This, supported by the transference of other features associated with God in the OT, suggests that Jesus is not only portrayed as a human equipped with absolute power over wind and sea, but as a visible manifestation of YHWH on earth and intrinsic to the identity of Israel's God.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 339.

¹⁰⁸ Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 92.

5. Jesus' Power over Death

5.1. Introduction

In Mark 5:35-43, the Evangelist tells the story of the raising of Jairus' twelve year old daughter. This is the only Markan passage in which Jesus returns a person who has died to life. But the attribution of this divine power to Jesus is not limited to this one place. Mark alludes to it in at least three other healing miracles which he narrates. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the passion predictions and the accusation of Jesus as one who destroys and rebuilds the temple attribute to Jesus the power to raise *himself*. We begin, however, by examining whether the raising of dead was regarded as a divine prerogative in the Second Temple period.

5.2. The Lord who Makes the Dead Alive

As the creator of everything, Israel's God was regarded as the only one who could take and give life.¹ In one of the strongest assertions of monotheism in the OT, YHWH declares: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; *I kill and I make alive*; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut 32:39).² God's power over life and death points in this passage to his absolute sovereignty and divinity. A similar line of thought can be found in the second of the *Eighteen Benedictions* where God's power to raise the dead has almost become a divine epithet: "Lord, you are almighty forever who makes the dead to live ... And you are faithful to make the dead alive. Blessed are you, Lord, who makes the dead alive."³ This is further confirmed by the two OT stories in which the raising of a dead person are recounted. Neither Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24), nor Elisha (2 Kgs 4:18-37) are more than God's instruments through which the deity accomplishes the miracles. 2 Kgs 17:20-22 states explicitly that God gives the life back to the boy in response to Elijah's prayer, and 2 Kgs 4:33 likewise recounts how Elisha prays to

¹ See H.-C. Kammler, *Christologie und Eschatologie: Joh 5,17-30 als Schlüsseltext johanneischer Theologie* (WUNT 126; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000), 76-89.

² See further e.g., Gen 2:7; 1 Sam 2:6; 25:29; 2 Kgs 5:7; Job 34:14-15; Pss 68:20; 73:27; 90:3; Ezek 37:1-14; Tob 13:2; 2 Macc 7:22-23; 4 Macc 18:19; Wis 16:13; *Jos. Asen.* 20:7.

³ Cf. Rom 4:17. For the NT, see further Matt 10:28-29; Mk 12:27; Luke 12:20; Acts 26:8; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 1:9; 4:14; 1 Tim 6:13; Jas 4:14-15. For this as a divine prerogative in Rabbinic texts, see Str-B 1:523.

YHWH. Both prophets are dependent on God and do not themselves cause the miracle.⁴

The view that power over death was regarded as a unique, divine prerogative in the Second Temple period has, however, been called into question since the publication of 4Q521 in 1992.⁵ The text envisages a time when the blind will be given sight, *the dead will be raised*, and good news will be preached to the poor. In the first study of this text, Wise and Tabor claimed that these actions are ascribed to the Messiah, and, accordingly, that the text portrays an extremely exalted Messiah, a Messiah who “controls heaven and earth, heals the wounded and raises the dead.”⁶ In

⁴ This is also evident in later Jewish receptions of these stories (Sir 48:5; 4 Ezra 7:36-39 [109]; Josephus, *Ant.* 8:325-27; *Liv. Pro.* 11:5; 12:12; for the Rabbinic view, see Str-B 1:594; 737; 895). Similar stories are told about some rabbis (*b. Meg.* 7b; *b. Abob. Zar.* 10b; *Lev. Rab.* 10:4; see Str-B 1:560; 2:545). The rabbi “prays for compassion” (the same expression is used in rabbinic retellings of the Elijah story; *b. Sanh.* 113a) and the dead is made alive. However, the tone of these stories is, as J. P. Meier (*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* [New York: Doubleday, 1994], 838, n. 3) notes, “folkloric and even comedic.” The general rabbinic rule is that God does not place the “key” of the resurrection of dead in the hand of any other being (*b. Ta’an.* 2a; see further Str-B 1:523; 737). *y. Šeb.* 9:38 (cited in Str-B 1:557) definitely falls into the category of jokes. Fiebig’s claim (*Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1911], 36-37; cited by e.g., H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* [NovTSup 9; Leiden: Brill, 1965], 560) that the resurrection of the dead was ascribed to the rabbis in the tannaitic period cannot be maintained. He bases this conclusion on *Mekilta Amalek* 1:2 (for the text, see *Mekhila according to Rabbi Ishmael: An Analytical Translation* [trans. J. Neusner; 2 vols. Brown Judaic Studies 154; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 2:7-8). First, Fiebig dates the text too early. It is probably from the second half of the third century (G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [trans. and ed. M. Bockmuehl; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 253-55). Second, his interpretation of the text is incorrect; it does not attribute to rabbis the ability to raise the dead, but illustrates R. Eleazar b. Shammua’s statement, “The reverence owing to your master should be like the awe owing to Heaven,” with reference to 2 Kgs 4:29: “And so you find in the case of Gehazi: When Elisha said to Gehazi, ‘Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand’ (2 Kgs. 4:29), he began to lean on his staff and go along. They said to him, ‘Where are you going, Gehazi?’ He said to them, ‘To resurrect the dead.’ They said to him, ‘And can you resurrect the dead? And is it not the Holy One, blessed be He, who resurrects the dead? “The Lord kills and brings to life” (1 Sam. 2:6).’ He said to them, ‘So too my lord can kill and bring back to life.’” The point of the story is that Gehazi honours his master Elisha by attributing to him the divine ability to kill and bring back to life. Does this then mean that the rabbis attributed this power to Elisha himself? In all likelihood not. As the biblical passage shows, Gehazi was not able to accomplish the miracle. The dead returned to life only after several attempts and after Elisha had prayed to God. Furthermore, several other rabbinic passages attribute resurrection miracles to God himself. *Gen. Rab.* 77:1: “You find that everything that the Holy One, blessed be he, is destined to do in the age to come *he* has already gone ahead and done *through* the righteous in this world. The Holy One, blessed be he, will raise the dead, and Elijah raised the dead...” (Text: *Genesis Rabbah* [3 vols.; trans. J. Neusner; Brown Judaic Studies 104-6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 3:117); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9.4.2 on Eccl 3:15: “The Holy One, blessed be He, has said that he is going to resurrect the dead: *he* has already resurrected the dead *through* Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel” (Text: *Pesikta deRab Kahana* [2 vols.; trans. J. Neusner; Brown Judaic Studies 122-3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 1:142).

⁵ For transcriptions and translations of all the fragments of 4Q521, as well as detailed discussion of it, see E. Puech, “Apocalypse messianique,” *DJD* 25:1-38.

⁶ M. O. Wise and J. D. Tabor, “The Messiah at Qumran,” *BAR* 18.6 (1992): 60-65, 65.

other words, this appears to be a striking exception to the general idea that only God can raise the dead.

Wise and Tabor's interpretation of 4Q521 is not without problems, however, and has been disputed in subsequent studies of the text. In the first place, it is not clear whether this text actually refers to a messiah. משיח, which appears in line 1, can be read as both singular and plural and may refer to one or several "anointed one/s."⁷ This may, of course, refer to one or several messiah/s, but other anointed figures can also be in view. Stegemann has, for example, argued for the plural reading and identified the biblical prophets as referents.⁸ The first two lines of the fragment, which he reads as a *parallelismus membrorum*, refer, in his view, to the two parts of the biblical canon, the prophets whose teachings must be obeyed (line 1) and the Torah which God gave to Moses through his holy ones, i.e., the angels (line 2).⁹ Whether Stegemann is correct or not, it is in any case questionable that line 1 ("[for hea]ven and earth will listen to/obey¹⁰ his anointed one/s") refers to the Messiah's control of nature, as Wise and Tabor claimed. It is more likely that it should be understood as obedience to teaching, especially as the following line says that, "none who is in them will turn away from the commandments." That is, lines 1 and 2 envisage an age of perfect obedience.¹¹

Second, Wise and Tabor's interpretation was partly based on an incorrect reading of the manuscript,¹² according to which the first part of line 11 read, "And as for the wonders that are *not* the work of the Lord." They then assumed that healing of

⁷ Cf. the translation by J. Maier, *Die Qumran-Essener: Die Texte vom Toten Meer* (3 vols. München: E. Reinhardt, 1995-96), 2:683.

⁸ H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 49-51. For a detailed defence of this view, see M. Becker, "4Q521 und die Gesalbten," *RevQ* 69 (1997): 73-96. In difference from Stegemann, Becker argues that "the holy ones" in the second line also refers to prophets.

⁹ The use of anointed ones with reference to the prophets is attested elsewhere in Qumran (cf. 1QM 11:7-8; CD 2:12-13; 6:1). Against this interpretation, it could be argued that the order in which the prophets precede the Torah is awkward, but it is found in at least one other place, Matt 11:13.

¹⁰ משיח can mean both. It is not unlikely that there is an allusion to Deut 32:1 and Isa 1:2. J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 120, proposes an allusion to Elijah in Sir 48:3. But it must not be overlooked that Elijah shuts up the heavens "by the word of the Lord" (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1 and 18:1).

¹¹ Cf. R. Bergmaier, "Beobachtungen zu 4Q521 f2, II, 1-13," *ZDMG* 145 (1995): 38-48, 44; Becker, "Gesalbten," 83-88; J. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran* (WUNT 2:104; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998), 388.

¹² See e.g., F. García Martínez, "Messianische Erwartungen in Qumran" in *Der Messias, JBTh* 8 (1993): 171-208.

the blind, resurrection of the dead, and preaching of the good news (line 12) were attributed to the Messiah and *not* to God. This was clearly wrong. There is no mention at all of a Messiah after line 1 in this fragment. Furthermore, the text explicitly identifies “the Lord” as the grammatical subject of the clauses in line 5 (“For the Lord will seek out the devout....”) and 11 (“and the glorious things that have not taken place the Lord will do as he s[aid], [12] for he will heal the wounded and give life to the dead, he will preach good news to the poor ones...”). All interpreters therefore now agree that the action and eschatological promises in line 5-8 and 11-13 have God as, at least, its grammatical subject.

Some scholars nevertheless maintain that a messiah brings these promises to fulfilment as God’s agent.¹³ Nowhere else is God the subject of preaching good news to the poor, it is claimed; it is the work of a herald or messenger (cf. Isa 61:1).¹⁴ If this is accomplished through human agency, it follows that the other actions ascribed to God also must be performed by a human agent, and as a messiah is mentioned in line 1 it is likely that he will be the one who performs the deeds on behalf of God.¹⁵ This view, of course, assumes that lines 1-2 are a part of the larger unity, something which cannot be taken for granted.¹⁶ More importantly, the argument that God cannot bring the good news is not convincing. Puech has pointed out that God brought good news to Abraham.¹⁷ Furthermore, God appears as the one who preaches or brings good news in the Book of Isaiah (cf. 42:9; 45:19; 52:6-7 LXX).¹⁸ Thus, even though a prophet is preaching the good news in Isa 61:1, it does not mean that God himself cannot proclaim the good news to the poor in 4Q521, as indeed the text itself says.¹⁹

¹³ E.g., O. Betz and R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran, und der Vatikan: Klarstellungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 111-15; J. J. Collins, “The Works of the Messiah,” *DSD* 1 (1994): 98-112; idem, *Scepter*, 117-23.

¹⁴ Collins, “The Works of the Messiah,” 100.

¹⁵ In contrast to Wise and Tabor, Collins does not see the agency of God and of the messiah as mutually exclusive (*Scepter*, 132, n. 85).

¹⁶ Bergmaier, “Beobachtungen,” 43, suggests that a new psalm begins on line 3.

¹⁷ E. Puech, “Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q521 and Qumran Messianism,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues* (ed. D. W. Perry and E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 545-565, 558, with reference to Gen 12:3 and Gal 3:8.

¹⁸ See esp. Kammler, *Christologie*, 86-87.

¹⁹ The allusion to Isa 60:1 is probably the result of an association of Ps 146:7-8 with Isa 60:1 due to similar content and words. Isa 60:1: “...the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; [...], and the opening of the prison to those who are bound”; Ps 146:7-8: “YHWH sets the prisoners

To sum up, 4Q521 does not provide unambiguous evidence that power to “give life to the dead” was attributed to the Messiah, or, for that matter, any other end-time miracles.²⁰ These are attributed to God himself,²¹ and as everywhere else in the early Jewish literature God is the one who raises the dead.²²

5.3. *The Raising of Jairus’ Daughter (Mark 5:21-24; 35-43)*

The miraculous resurrection of the twelve year old daughter of Jairus is the last of the series of four miracles that begins with Jesus’ stilling of the storm.²³ What begins as a healing story – Jairus comes to Jesus pleading him to heal his daughter who is at the point of death – turns into a demonstration of Jesus’ power over death.²⁴ The passage has some affinities with the Elijah and Elisha stories (1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:18-37).²⁵ In all three stories a child is brought back to life and returned to its distressed parents. But the manner in which Jesus raises the child differs radically

free; YHWH opens the eyes of the blind.” See Kammler, *Christologie*, 87. Becker, “Gesalbten,” 91, notes that the almost verbatim citation of Psalm 146 takes precedence over the allusion to Isa 61:1.

²⁰ It is also possible that 4Q512 does not envisage a literal healing of people, but uses this language metaphorically to describe God’s eschatological saving act of Israel. See 3.4.2.

²¹ García Martínez, “Erwartungen,” 184; Stegemann, *Essener*, 341; Bergmaier, “Beobachtungen,” 44; Becker, “Gesalbten,” 90-92; H. Kvalbein, “The Wonders of the End-Time: Metaphoric Language in 4Q521 and the Interpretation of Matthew 11.5par,” *JSP* 18 (1998): 106-08; Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 363-64; Puech, “Remarks,” 558; Kammler, *Christologie*, 88; C. A. Evans, “Qumran’s Messiah: How Important is He?,” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. J. Collins and R. A. Kugler; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 135-49, 139; L. Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2:170; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003), 169-82, esp. 176.

²² The only undisputed evidence for the idea that the Messiah was expected to raise the dead is found in *Pirqê de Rabbi Eliezer* 32 from the 8th-9th century. See Str-B 1:524 and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 328-30.

²³ Jesus demonstrates his sovereign power over sea and wind (4:35-41), over the demons (5:1-21), over illness and death (5:22-43).

²⁴ Mark’s story is in this way closer to the raising of Lazarus in John 11, than to Luke’s story of the young man at Nain (Luke 11-17).

²⁵ See e.g. K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (SANT 23; München: Kösel-Verlag, 1970), 117-18; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:313; Guelich, *Mark*, 303. Goppelt, on the other hand, notes crucial differences and does not find any allusions to the OT miracles (*Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1939], 83). For similar stories in the Hellenistic literature, see Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 191; W. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999), 13-15; 24-30; 39; 45-47. That this was generally attributed to human beings is not clear. Asclepius who was reputed to have raised people was regarded as a god and worshipped at the time of Jesus (Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 24); Lucian ridicules the miracle worker and those who believe in it (*Philosophers*, 26) and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 4:45) is open to the possibility that Apollonius’ resuscitation of a young bride was a matter of apparent death.

from the OT stories.²⁶ Elijah and Elisha pray to God for the miracle. Elijah stretches himself upon the child three times²⁷ while praying to God. Elisha likewise prays to God and then stretches himself upon the child after having put his mouth, eyes, and hands to the mouth, eyes, and, hands of the child. This time the miracle is only accomplished after a second attempt.²⁸

In contrast to these OT stories, Jesus does not pray to God,²⁹ neither does he invoke the name of God, nor use any means of manipulation.³⁰ He simply takes the girl's hand³¹ and commands her to raise (5:41). She does this immediately and walks around in the room, confirming the miracle that has just taken place. Most of the miracles recorded in Mark are credited to Jesus' powerful words, but this aspect is stressed here. In his translation of the Aramaic "Talitha kum," Mark adds words which explicitly identify the identity of the speaker: "Little girl, *I say to you*, arise [σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε]." This strongly suggests that Mark attributed the miracle to Jesus' powerful and creative words alone. Jesus is not an agent for the resurrection in the sense Elijah and Elisha were, who both were dependant on God for the miracle.

²⁶ This is surprisingly overlooked by Collins, *Mark*, 277, who does not mention that prayer plays an important role in these OT stories. On this crucial difference, see also 10.2.1 below.

²⁷ According to the LXX version, Elijah breathes upon the child three times.

²⁸ On the Jewish reception of these miracles, see n. 4 above.

²⁹ Cf. the story of the raising of Tabitha through Peter in Acts 9:37-42. It is explicitly said that Peter prays to God, in a way which reminds of Elijah and Elisha, before he calls Tabitha to rise. This account is also similar to the OT stories in that Peter asks all who are present to leave the room. Peter thus stands on the same side as Elijah and Elisha as instruments through which God himself raises the dead, whereas Jesus gives life to the dead through his own divine power. Cf. W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting* (FRLANT 163; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 114. The same difference between Jesus and his disciples can be found in Mark 9:14-29; while Jesus instructs his disciples to accomplish the exorcism through prayer, he himself performs it without.

³⁰ The Aramaic phrase "Talitha kum" is not to be taken as a magical formula (so e.g., R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition* [7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967], 238; F. Horton, "Nochmals ephatha in Mk 7:34," *ZNW* 77 [1986]: 101-08; B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter* [FRLANT 170, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996], 263; Marcus, *Mark*, 363; Collins, *Mark*, 285-86, appealing to ancient magician's use of unintelligible words or foreign languages) as the words are immediately translated (Lane, *Mark*, 198; Pesch, *Markus* 1:310; Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:218; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 219-21; Gundry, *Mark*, 274-75; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:848-49, n. 52). Mark retains Aramaic words and translates them elsewhere (3:17; 7:11, 34; 11:9-10; 14:36; 15:22; 34).

³¹ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:218, suggests that YHWH's helping hand is in view (Ps 37:24; Ps 44:3; Exod 3:20; 7:5). More relevant are perhaps two other passages where the LXX uses the same vocabulary for God's hand (Isa 42:6; Ps 72[73]:23, as suggested by Marcus, *Mark*, 199).

Jesus rather demonstrates that he shares the divine power of raising the dead with God.³²

It is no wonder that those present react with utter astonishment (5:42: ἐξέστησαν ἐκστάσει μεγάλη). The verb in combination with the cognate noun “signifies displacement, astonishment bewilderment to the strongest degree.”³³ It is the reaction to divine intervention or an epiphany. The same combination of verb and the cognate accusative appears in 4:41 (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν) and probably signals that this miracle should be understood along the lines of Jesus’ stilling of the storm. He who is obeyed by wind and sea demonstrates here that even death obeys him.³⁴ Furthermore, the verb³⁵ is also used in Mark 2:12 and 6:51, which may be another hint on the part of Mark that Jesus acts in the role of God also in this passage.

Further evidence for Jesus’ sovereign authority over death in this pericope is also found in the prelude to the miracle. When it is reported to Jairus that his daughter has died (5:35), Jesus immediately tells him not worry (μὴ φοβοῦ)³⁶ but to believe. The implication is that Jesus knows he has the power to raise the daughter. He does not only hope he will be able to or is dependent on God’s willingness to work a miracle, but knows beforehand what is going to happen.³⁷ Even more striking is Jesus’ words to the crowd in the house: “The child is not dead but sleeping.” These words do not indicate that the girl only appeared to be dead.³⁸ The death of the girl has been reported to Jairus, and the funeral is already under way when Jesus and his followers arrive. Rather, these words seem to attribute to Jesus what later in the Gospel is attributed to God: “He is not a God of the dead, but of the living” (Mark

³² Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:310: “Er erweckt Tote durch Berührung und Wort, handelt direkt in Gottes Kraft.” Nevertheless, he concludes that Jesus here is presented as the eschatological prophet (1:313). Similarly, Guelich, *Mark*, 304, who views Jesus as one greater than Elijah and Elisha. Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 205 and Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:217 view the event as a divine epiphany.

³³ T. Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 128; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 120.

³⁴ A. Pohl, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1986), 240.

³⁵ The noun appears here and at 16:8.

³⁶ Here is another link to the sea walking-account (6:50).

³⁷ So correctly Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 106.

³⁸ Contra Taylor, *Mark*, 295; van der Loos, *Miracles*, 569. Cf. the critique by Meier, *Marginal Jew* 2: 843-44.

12:27). Also for Jesus are the dead not dead, but alive.³⁹ In other words, the Markan Jesus makes an exceptionally strong christological claim and places himself on the divine side of the creator-creation divide by this declaration.

A similar intra-textual link between God and Jesus may also be found when one considers the possible analogy between this story and Jesus' own resurrection.⁴⁰ Just as Jesus here raises the little girl, so God will later raise Jesus (16:6).⁴¹ This, then, implies that the same divine power is at work in both events and that Jesus shares this power with God.

5.4. Resurrection Language in Other Healing Stories

Three other healing stories in Mark use a language which resembles the language of the story we just examined and of Jesus' own resurrection: the healings of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (1:31), the paralytic (2:9,11), and the boy possessed by a demon (9:27). All three stories share the verb ἐγείρω. Jesus raises the mother; he tells the lame to rise; he raises the demon possessed boy. The first and the last of these stories are also similar in that Jesus takes the hand (κρατῆσας τῆς χειρός). Furthermore, the verb ἀνιστῆμι appears in the story of Jairus' daughter and the account of the demon possessed boy. It could perhaps be argued that this language is accidental and does not necessarily link these stories to the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and Jesus' own resurrection. The language may simply be demanded by the situation where the object of Jesus' saving action is laid in bed or on the ground. Yet, even though it cannot be established beyond doubt that Mark in these stories wanted to communicate Jesus' power to bestow life and perhaps also alluded to Jesus' own resurrection, this seems likely in the light of the crucial role that the resurrection of Jesus played in early Christianity and the fact that in all three stories a person is brought back to ordinary life.

³⁹ Cf. Kertelge, *Wunder*, 116: "In seinem Wort äussert sich daher ein unerhörter Anspruch, nämlich der Anspruch Gottes selbst, der nach Mk 12,27 nicht ein 'Gott der Toten' ist, sondern, 'Gott der Lebenden'"; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 106-07: "Dieser Tod des Mädchens ist also wie mit Gottes Augen gesehen, dieses Wort wie mit Gottes Munde gesprochen." Similarly, Pesch, *Markus*, 1:308; Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:217; Ernst, *Markus*, 165; Bayer, *Markus*, 233. Others suggest that Jesus views the girl through the miracle which is going to take place (Guelich, *Mark*, 302), the ease with which he is going to raise her (Collins, *Mark*, 285), or that it is an intimation to the readers of his ultimate victory over death (Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 177).

⁴⁰ See e.g., Hurtado, *Mark*, 88; Marcus, *Mark*, 372-73; (cf. 199; 664); Boring, *Mark*, 163.

⁴¹ But see my discussion below on the agent of Jesus' resurrection.

The situation of Peter's mother-in-law was life-threatening – fever may not seem dangerous to modern readers but was regarded as a deadly power in the ancient world⁴² – and similar to that of Jairus' daughter when he approached Jesus. In this case, however, Jesus intervenes before death. Without use of manipulations or magic words, or for that matter any prayer, Jesus acts with sovereign authority and immediately restores the woman to ordinary life by taking her hand and raising her. The fever does not only leave here; she immediately regains her strength so that she can take up her duties and serve a meal. It is, indeed, a bit surprising that the verb ἐγείρω is used here. For, although the woman is lying in the bed, one would expect Jesus to rebuke the fever first *so that* she can rise from her bed. Instead, it is Jesus' raising of her which accomplishes the miracle. It suggests that a link to 5:35-43 is intentional and that the latter story is anticipated here. The same divine power is at work in both cases.⁴³ On another level, this story may also imply that the woman is raised to a new life, a life in service of Jesus (cf. 15:41).

Before turning to the healing of the paralyzed man, it should be pointed out that the healing of the leper (1:40-45) which follows the healing of the mother-in-law also may have some connotation of resurrection from the dead. Lepers were dead to the society, cut off from all human relations. Furthermore, the healing of a leper was regarded to be just as difficult as to raise a dead person.⁴⁴ When Jesus heals the leper he no doubt also brings him back to life.⁴⁵

Though the only verbal link between the healing of the paralyzed man and the raising of Jairus' daughter is the verb ἐγείρω, the echo of resurrection is stronger here. Jesus commands the man to rise as he later will command the little girl (2:11). The man may not be close to death, but he is nevertheless powerless to help himself. Like the little girl he is given his life back.⁴⁶ Further, the creative word of Jesus is stressed here as in 5:41. In fact, exactly the same words are used: “*I say to you, rise [σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε], take up your bed and go.*”

⁴² Boring, *Mark*, 66.

⁴³ For hints of resurrection in this story, see esp. Marcus, *Mark*, 199; Boring, *Mark*, 66.

⁴⁴ Cf. 2 Kgs 5:7; Job 18:13.

⁴⁵ See Pesch, *Markus*, 1:142-45.

⁴⁶ Boring, *Mark*, 78, who notes that to be delivered from sickness is to be delivered from death in the Psalms (Pss 6; 22:14-15; 31:9-10; 41:1-10; 55:4-5; 56:13).

The completion of Jesus' exorcism of the demon possessed boy is also described as a resurrection from the dead (9:25-27).⁴⁷ The boy falls to the ground and becomes like dead after Jesus has driven out the demon, so that people even consider him to be dead (ὥστε πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν). Perhaps we have here an echo of 5:35, 39-40. In any event, Jesus' raising of the "dead" boy undoubtedly echoes his raising of the dead girl (5:41-42).⁴⁸ In both stories Jesus stretches out the hand, he raises/commands to rise, and the boy/girl stands up. The demon which often has brought the boy close to death (9:22) is cast out; Satan is defeated, and the boy is raised to a new life.⁴⁹ Jesus demonstrates his power not only over Satan, but also over death.⁵⁰

Even if it cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt that Mark wished to communicate Jesus' power to raise the dead in these healing stories, his choice of language nevertheless strongly suggests this. For Mark, Jesus is indeed one who shares the divine prerogative to raise the dead. One question remains to be answered, however: Was this power limited to the resuscitation of other people or did Mark also think that Jesus raised himself?

5.5. *Did Jesus Raise Himself?*

In his commentary on the resurrection of Jesus in the first passion prediction (8:31), Gnllka writes: "Sie ist nicht als Tat Gottes an Jesus – wie in den Auferweckungsaussagen –, sondern als Vollmachtstat des Menschensohnes aufzufassen. Der Menschensohn überwindet kraft eigener Macht den Tod."⁵¹ Gnllka here follows Hahn's interpretation of this passage: "... anders als bei dem ἐγερθῆναι liegt der Ton nicht auf dem göttlichen Handeln beim Ostergeschehen, vielmehr geht es um die Macht des Menschensohnes, selbst vom Tode wideraufzuerstehen."⁵²

⁴⁷ Pesch, *Markus*, 2:94.

⁴⁸ For this and other parallels between the two stories, see Marcus, *Mark*, 662.

⁴⁹ The passage may on a secondary level anticipate John 5:24-25.

⁵⁰ O. Hofius, "Die Allmacht des Sohnes Gottes und das Gebet des Glaubens: Erwägungen zu Thema und Aussage der Wundererzählung Mk 9,14-29," *ZTK* 101 (2004): 117-137, 133.

⁵¹ Gnllka, *Markus*, 2:16, according to whom the passion predictions are christological rather than soteriological statements.

⁵² F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (FRLANT 83; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 49. Cited with approval by Dschulnigg, *Markus*, 234. The interpretation is anticipated by Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 167 (cf. however 182); H. E. Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der synoptischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1959), 172.

According to Hahn, the rejection and resurrection is under the sovereign control of the Son of Man, in a way which anticipates Johannine ideas (John 10:17-18; 5:26).

This interpretation is grounded in the use of the active verb ἀνίστημι in all the Markan passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:34 and 9:9), which for Hahn and Gnilka stands in sharp contrast to the use of passive ἐγείρω elsewhere (14:28; 16:6). ἀνίστημι can be either transitive (e.g., Acts 9:41) or intransitive (Mark 1:35; 2:14; 5:42 etc.), but since the only possible subject of the verb is the Son of Man, it must be intransitive and have the meaning “rise” or “stand up”: “after three days he will rise” (8:31).⁵³ There is nothing which indicates that the verb as such is passive in meaning and has God as its subject. Mark’s use of ἀνίστημι may then be intentional and serve to portray Jesus himself as the active agent in his own resurrection.⁵⁴ If then God is the agent of the resurrection in 14:28 and 16:6, we have two parallel traditions standing alongside each other already in Mark.⁵⁵

The answer is, however, not so clear-cut when one looks at Mark’s use of ἀνίστημι elsewhere in the Gospel. On the one hand, there are those passages in which the subject undoubtedly stands up (e.g., 1:35; 2:14; 5:42; 9:27; 14:57; 60), but on the other we have 12:23 and 25 where the active ἀνίστημι is used for the general resurrection and nothing suggests that men and women would be able to accomplish this themselves. It must be assumed that God wakes up the dead who then stand up, as Jesus *calls* on the daughter of Jairus who then stands up or as in the case of the demon possessed boy who stands up after Jesus has raised him (ἤγειρεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀνέστη [9:27]). The passion predictions could in this light be viewed as statements about Jesus’ own act, his standing up, but they presuppose that God first has returned Jesus to life.⁵⁶

Hahn and Gnilka contrast, as we noted, the active ἀνίστημι in the passion predictions with the passive ἐγείρω in 14:28 and 16:6 which they assume to be a *passivum divinum*, a statement about God’s raising of Jesus. Contrary to a widely

⁵³ On the meaning of the verb, see J. Kremer, “ἀνάστασις,” *EDNT* 1:88-92.

⁵⁴ With the exception of Luke 18:33, the synoptic parallels have passive ἐγείρω instead of ἀνίστημι. For J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie* (2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973), 264, this does not indicate a theological move, however, but reflects a *Gräzisierung*. Mark’s use of ἀνίστημι is, according to Jeremias, Semitic and must be understood as passive in meaning since neither Hebrew nor Aramaic has a passive verb for the resurrection of the dead.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ign. *Smyrn.* 2; 7:1; *Trall.* 9:2.

⁵⁶ Cf. Kremer, *EDNT* 1:91.

held opinion among exegetes, however, the passive form of ἐγείρω is not necessarily passive in meaning, “to be raised,” but medial-intransitive, “to stand up.”⁵⁷ Active ἀνίστημι is, for example, used as the equivalent of passive ἐγείρω in Mark 12:23-26 and LXX Isa 26:19. Even more striking is the use of ἡγέρθη in John 2:22 in a context which clearly attributes the resurrection to Jesus himself. Mark 14:28 and 16:6 are, then, no less active in meaning than the passion predictions.⁵⁸ Both set of passages state that Jesus will actively stand up. Again, this does not necessarily mean that Jesus will raise himself from the dead. The medial-intransitive ἡγέρθη is used also of John the Baptist (6:14, 16) and in the discussion of the general resurrection (12:26).

All passages in Mark which refer to Jesus’ resurrection, thus probably speak about him actively rising. Whether God first wakes him up and returns him to life or Jesus raises himself is not clear. In contrast to Acts (e.g., 3:15; 4:10) or the Pauline corpus (Rom 4:24; 1 Cor 15:15), active ἐγείρω is not used with God as subject in Mark, and consequently there are no unambiguous statements attributing the resurrection of Jesus to God. On the one hand, in light of the early Christian view attested in Paul’s letters and the Jewish understanding of the resurrection, it may be implied that God is the agent of Jesus’ resurrection. On the other hand, since Jesus exercises this divine power elsewhere in Mark it cannot be excluded that Jesus raises himself. If we cannot reach a decision based on the use of resurrection language in Mark, is there any other passage which may give a hint?

E. Ellis has suggested that we indeed have one in the accusation of the trial witnesses in Mark 14:58.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ For a detailed defence of the medial-intransitive meaning, see J. Kremer “ἐγείρω,” *EDNT* 1:372-76; O. Hofius, “‘Am dritten Tag auferstanden von den Toten’: Erwägungen zum Passiv ἐγείρεσθαι in christologischen Aussagen des Neuen Testaments,” in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (FS: J. Lambrecht; eds. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire; BETL 165; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 93-106. See also e.g., BAGD, 432-33.

⁵⁸ Cf. what J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (4 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908-76), 3:57, say with reference to Mark 14:28 and 16:6: “ἡγέρθη... is passive only in form and is used of the resurrection with very active nuance.... There is simply no difference between this and ἀνέστη, where the action of the Father is assumed no more and no less.” Cf. also Moulton and Turner, *Grammar*, 1:163.

⁵⁹ “Deity-Christology in Mark 14:58,” originally published in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 192-203; reproduced and slightly reworked in E. E. Ellis, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (NovTSup 97; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 38-51. I refer to the latter in the following. Mark 14:58 is discussed on pp. 44-49.

We heard him say, “I will destroy this temple, made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.”

According to Mark, this witness is false (14:57) or at least inconsistent (14:59). Ellis argues that the witnesses understand this saying as directed against the Jerusalem temple-building. This understanding is, however, rejected by Mark, and part of the falsity of the testimony. Jesus has predicted the destruction of the temple (13:2), but he has not claimed that he will destroy it, or that he has any intention of rebuilding it. This is further implied by the use of two different words for the temple in these passages (13:2: ἱερόν; 14:58: ναός). Mark does not deny that Jesus actually has spoken about destroying and building the temple, only that he spoke with reference to the Jerusalem temple. According to Ellis, Mark has further hinted this by qualifying the saying with the phrases “made with hands” and “not made with hands.” These are not original to Jesus’ saying or to the accusation. Rather, they are Mark’s editorial comments which help to distinguish the true aspect of the saying from the false. Ellis argues that these two phrases should be understood against the background of the Christian Hellenist mission and that they refer to the present creation and the resurrection creation, respectively.⁶⁰ Another part of the falsity of the testimony is found in the phrase, “I will build *another* temple.” Jesus has spoken about one and the same temple that will be destroyed and rebuilt. The true version of Jesus’ saying is reflected in 15:29: “The one who destroys the temple and rebuilds it in three days” (cf. Matt 26:61; John 2:19). However, the decisive clue to the right understanding of Jesus’ saying lies in the phrase, “in three days.” It would remind the audience of the passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:34) and point to the resurrection of Jesus.⁶¹ For Mark, the temple which is destroyed and rebuilt in three days is Jesus’ individual body. He thus agrees with the interpretation in John 2:21. On the basis of this, Ellis concludes that the temple saying is a “veiled claim to raise himself from the dead” on the part of Jesus.⁶²

Ellis’ interpretation is intriguing. If he is right, we have here a hint from Mark how the sayings related to the resurrection should be understood. But, there is one serious difficulty with it. Nothing in Mark’s Gospel indicates that the opponents of Jesus have heard him predict his own resurrection after three days. They do not have

⁶⁰ Ellis, “Deity-Christology,” 46-47.

⁶¹ France, *Mark*, 607: “A Christian reader, even without knowing Jn. 2:19-22, could hardly fail to recognise in the idea of its being raised up διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν a reference to Jesus’ resurrection.”

⁶² Ellis, “Deity-Christology,” 49.

the decisive clue. Mark's audience who have heard Jesus' predictions can connect the alleged saying about the temple with Jesus' death and resurrection, but how can the opponents in the narrative world of Mark make that connection?⁶³ Therefore, if there is a connection between this accusation and the blasphemy accusation, this must rather have to do with Jesus' alleged claim to destroy the Jerusalem temple and build a new one.⁶⁴ The question remains, however, if Mark worked with narrative irony in this case and intended his audience to infer a reference to Jesus' own body and thereby an implicit claim on the part of Jesus to raise himself. Several scholars have argued that there is much more to these words than merely a false accusation. But what does "the temple" refer to? It may not necessarily refer to Jesus own body; it can just as well refer to the Christian community.⁶⁵ These two need not necessarily exclude each other. Yet, crucial for Ellis' interpretation is the relationship between the new and the old. Does Mark envisage *another* temple, which would point to the Christian community, or is there continuity between the old and the new temple, "another" being a part of the false witness?⁶⁶

Thus, while it cannot be excluded that Mark wished his readers to infer that the temple saying was a claim on the part of Jesus that he was going to raise himself from the dead,⁶⁷ it is not possible to demonstrate this. It would depend on too many uncertain assumptions. Nothing in Mark's Gospel forces us to conclude that Mark viewed God as the agent of Jesus' resurrection, but neither can it be shown that he saw Jesus as raising himself. Jesus rose from the dead, more than this Mark does not say.

5.6. Conclusion

Mark presents Jesus as one with power to bring back human beings from the dead. This is demonstrated in the story of Jairus' daughter and probably also alluded to in three other healing stories (1:31; 2:9, 11; 9:27). In doing so, Jesus shares a divine

⁶³ According to John 2:21-22, the disciples understood this only after the resurrection.

⁶⁴ See 10.6.

⁶⁵ See D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 144-45. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 422, suggest that both may be in view.

⁶⁶ Although the passion predictions attribute the death of Jesus to others (cf. John 2:19), Mark 10:45 may point to Jesus' own initiative.

⁶⁷ The interpretation found in John 2:19-22 may very well have been around when Mark wrote his Gospel.

prerogative which the God of Israel alone exercised in his role as creator and bringer of life. There is no evidence that the Messiah was expected to raise the dead, nor are there any examples of other figures who did. The well-known stories about Elijah and Elisha in the OT and Peter in Acts present the miracles as God's response to prayers, a feature which is lacking in Mark's account about Jesus. Whether Mark also attributed the resurrection of Jesus to Jesus himself or to God is not clear, as Mark seems content to say that Jesus rose without explicitly specifying the agent.

6. Jesus' Walking on the Sea

6.1. Introduction

The term “epiphany” appears almost universally in discussions of Mark 6:45-52,¹ whether as a general characterization of the story or a more precise definition of its genre.² As an epiphany involves the manifestation of a *divine* or *heavenly* being,³ the use of this language implies that the pericope presents Jesus as in some sense “divine.”⁴ However, since many of the elements present in the sea-walking account are associated with and reserved for the God of Israel in the OT and Jewish traditions, it would probably be more pertinent to speak of a *theophany*.⁵ We shall

¹ For the history of interpretation, see P. J. Madden, *Jesus' Walking on the Sea: An Investigation of the Origin of the Narrative Account* (BZNW 81; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 1-41; for the background and exegesis, see esp. W. Berg, *Die Rezeption alttestamentlicher Motive im Neuen Testament dargestellt an den Seewandelerzählungen* (Freiburg: Hochschulverlag, 1979); J. P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:15b-21* (AnBib 87; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981).

² M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 71; 93-95, classified the story as *Novelle*, but argued that it presents an epiphany of Jesus. Recent studies define the genre of the pericope as a “sea-rescue epiphany” (Heil, *Walking*, 8-30) or an “epiphany” (Madden, *Walking*, 86-88). The most recent commentaries use the language of epiphany, but leave the question of its genre open (Collins, *Mark*, 327-28; Stein, *Mark*, 320-25).

³ Cf. the definition by E. Pax: “Unter ‘Epiphanie’ verstehen wir das plötzlich eintretende und ebenso rasch weichende Sichtbarwerden der Gottheit vor den Augen der Menschen unter gestalteten und ungestalteten Anschauungsformen, die natürlichen oder geheimnisvollen Charakter tragen” (ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ: *Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* [Münchener Theologischer Studien, I. Historische Abteilung 10; München: Karl Zink, 1955], 20), or Heil’s definition of the epiphany genre as “[a] disposition of literary motifs narrating a sudden and unexpected manifestation of a divine or heavenly being experienced by certain selected persons, in which the divine being reveals a divine attribute, action or message” (*Walking*, 8).

⁴ Heil uses “divine” in a wide sense. He includes “angelophanies” and “resurrectional christophanies” of the NT in the epiphany genre and calls angels “divine beings” (*Walking*, 8-9).

⁵ Pax, ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ, 20-21, notes that the terms epiphany and theophany are often used interchangeably and that it is a matter of preference. Heil, on the other hand, works with more precise definitions: “Like the literary genre of theophany, an epiphany narrates a coming of a divine being. In a theophany the divine being remains *invisible* and his coming is recognized only by its *effects on nature*. But in an epiphany the divine being assumes *visible form* and appears before the eyes of human beings” (*The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2-8, Matt 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36* [AnBib 144; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2000], 39 [italics mine]). Thus because YHWH’s walking on water in the OT is invisible, it is *theophanic*, whereas Jesus’ walking is visible and consequently *epiphanic* (*Walking*, 57). Heil, however, acknowledges that other scholars refer to what he defines as epiphany as theophany. My reason for preferring the term theophany is simply that it clarifies that it is not a question of any heavenly being, but the God of Israel. While the Hellenistic world knows of numerous *divine* beings, there is, according to the Jewish worldview, indeed a host of *heavenly* beings, but only one is truly divine. Cf. J. P. Meier *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol. 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:996, n. 118 and 1001, n. 141.

see that Mark 6:45-52 does not portray Jesus just as any heavenly being, but as if he was YHWH himself.

6.2. *Walking on the Sea*

We begin with what is not only the most striking feature, but also the center of the pericope, the act of walking on water.

And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea [περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης], and he wanted to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea [αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα].... (Mark 6:48-49)

It has been suggested that this passage alludes to a specific OT passage, namely Job 9:8.⁶ In the midst of a portrayal of God as the sovereign ruler over the creation this verse describes God as the one “who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea.” In its original context, this probably referred to God’s subduing of the chaos water at creation,⁷ but the LXX has given a slightly different meaning to the passage by rendering the latter part, περιπατῶν ὡς ἐπ’ ἐδάφους ἐπὶ θαλάσσης (“walking on the sea as if on ground”). The image is no longer God’s power over a defeated opponent, but his ability to walk on water without any difficulty.⁸ Thus, in both imagery and language Mark’s depiction of Jesus walking on the sea is closer to the LXX than to the MT. Mark’s use of almost exactly the same phrase (περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης) as in Job (περιπατῶν ... ἐπὶ θαλάσσης) suggests that an allusion to the Job passage is intended.⁹ This would then imply that Jesus acts in the role of God when walking on the Sea of Galilee. But before drawing any conclusions, there are other passages that must be considered.

First, there are a few references to supernatural journeys on the surface of the water in the Greek and Hellenistic literature.¹⁰ The Greek god of the sea, Poseidon, is

⁶ See e.g., Berg, *Rezeption*, 324-25; R. B. Hays, “Can the Gospels Teach Us how to Read the Old Testament?,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 402-18, 409.

⁷ Heil, *Walking*, 40, interprets it as a reference to the sea dragon Yamm.

⁸ Heil, *Walking*, 41.

⁹ On the criteria for identification of echoes, see R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-32. Note that *Apoc. El.* 3:8 may provide further evidence that early Christians saw an allusion to Job 9:8 in the sea-walking account, as it has the words “as if on dry ground” found in Job 9:8: “He will walk upon the sea and the rivers as upon dry land.” The passage refers to the miracles of the coming Antichrist, but these are described as an imitation of all Christ’s miracles, except for raising the dead.

¹⁰ For a survey of the texts, see A. Yarbro Collins, “Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45-52)” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competitions in the New Testament World*,

described as driving his chariot upon on the waves, and the same ability is ascribed to his Roman counterpart, Neptune.¹¹ Poseidon is also said to have given the power to walk on water to his sons Euphemus and Orion.¹² Walking on water is also one of the abilities ascribed to Zeus' son Heracles.¹³ The motif is thus generally associated with gods or semi-gods. This divine association of the motif is also apparent in the stories about Xerxes, Antiochus IV, and "the new Zeus manifest," Gaius Caligula.¹⁴ The latter's attempt to imitate Xerxes by bridging the sea between Baiae and Puteoli in Italy was well-known and presented him as the divine being he thought to be.¹⁵ Josephus' comments are instructive. He notes that Gaius "drove his chariot over it; and thought that, as he was a god, it was fit for him to travel over such roads as this was."¹⁶ At the same time, walking on water also becomes a proverb for the humanly impossible.¹⁷ This comes to expression in, for example, lists of unrealistic things one encounters in dreams. The association of walking on water with the humanly impossible may also be the reason for the popularity of the motif in magical spells; the properly instructed can achieve anything.¹⁸ To sum up, the power to walk on

ed. L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici, A. Standhartinger (Leiden: Brill, 1994): 207-27; Madden, *Walking*, 54-61. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 147, n. 244, notes that there are comparatively few Greek and Hellenistic texts which speak of gods and men walking on water. This speaks against the claim by Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 244 that this motif belongs to "erwartungsgemässen Repertoire des Wundertäters."

¹¹ Homer, *Il.* 13.26-31; Virgil *Aen.* 5.1081-85.

¹² Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* 1.179-84; Pseudo-Eratosthenes, *Catasterismi* 32. It should be noted that both passages use other verbs than Mark for "to walk."

¹³ Collins, "Rulers," 217-18.

¹⁴ Collins' claim that "the power to walk on water frequently was associated in Greek and Roman tradition with rulers" ("Rulers," 224) must be qualified. The point of these stories is not so much that some rulers in Greek and Roman traditions were associated with the power to travel on water, but that these stories implied their *divinity*. Xerxes and his army's crossing of the Hellespont was a technological achievement rather than a miracle (Madden, *Walking* 57-59). But the later comparison of Xerxes' crossing to Poseidon riding his chariot in Dio Chrysostom (3.30-31), shows that the ability attributed divinity to the ruler (cf. Herodotus, *History* 7.56: "O Zeus why have you taken the likeness of a Persian man?" [Godley, LCL]). This is also the case with Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 2 Macc 5:21 (see below).

¹⁵ See e.g., Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 59.17.1-11, esp. 17.11: "This too, caused the emperor some elation, and he declared that even Neptune was afraid of him; as for Darius and Xerxes, he made all manner of fun of them, claiming that he had bridged a far greater expanse of the sea than they had done" (Cary, LCL).

¹⁶ *Ant.* 19.6; (Whiston). For a detailed discussion of Caligula, see R. D. Aus, "Caught in the Act," *Walking on the Sea, and the Release of Barabbas Revisited* (SFSHJ 157; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 117-126.

¹⁷ On this, see Collins, "Rulers," 218-23; W. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999), 159.

¹⁸ PGM XXXIV.1-24, cited in Collins, "Rulers," 221, associates the ability to sail without a ship, with control of sun, moon, day and night. One should also notice the irony of Lucian when he treats the

water seems to have been a divine prerogative in the Greco-Roman literature, generally considered impossible for human beings.¹⁹ For those of Mark's audience who were familiar with these traditions the sea-walking account no doubt implied that Jesus was a divine being.

Turning to the OT and the Jewish tradition, we see that the pattern we found in the Greco-Roman literature is even more distinct.²⁰ No human being is able to walk on water;²¹ this ability is reserved for the God of Israel, the one creator of the world. We have already noted that numerous texts depict YHWH as the sovereign ruler of the sea or its personification.²² More importantly for our present purpose, several texts describe YHWH as travelling on the sea, or in the sea, or making a way in the sea. In a passage which reminds us somewhat of the Greek image of Poseidon, Hab 3:15 evokes the picture of YHWH riding in a chariot over the water: "You trampled on the sea with your horses, the surging of many waters." This statement appears in the context of a theophany and is used metaphorically to describe YHWH's victory over Israel's enemies. The LXX may be read as if God drives his horses *in* the sea, but the Barberini Greek version of Hab 3 and the Targum understand God's movement to be *on* the sea. As in the case of Job 9:8, YHWH exercises complete power over the sea. Unlike Job 9:8, but like Jesus' walking on water, YHWH's travel on the sea occurs in the context of theophany which describes the fearful coming of God.²³

When God appears to Job in a theophany in Job 38, God's sovereign control of the sea is one of the topics. In his magnificent speech to Job, God announces that he alone was able to subdue and set a limit for the sea (38:8-11). Furthermore, God rhetorically asks Job if he has entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the deep waters of the abyss (38:16).²⁴ The capacity to walk in the water is strictly

subject of walking on water. See e.g., H.-D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das neue Testament* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 166-67.

¹⁹ Berg, *Rezeption*, 72-76.

²⁰ On these texts, see, Berg, *Rezeption*, 76-98; Heil, *Walking*, 38-56.

²¹ Collins, "Rulers," somewhat surprisingly, brings Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha into the discussion, but none of them is ascribed the ability to walk on water. See Cotter, *Sourcebook*, 160, who, although she includes stories about these Jewish "heroes" in her discussion, notes that walking on water is a prerogative of God.

²² See 4.2.

²³ Heil, *Walking*, 45-46.

²⁴ The words περιπατέω and θάλασσα both occur in LXX Job 38:16.

reserved for the creator, and contrasted with man's inability. In fact, walking on the sea seems to belong to God's identity as creator.

In another theophanic context describing God's powerful deliverance of his people at the Exodus Ps 77:19 states: "Through the sea was your way, and your path through many waters; yet your footprints were not known." Here the waters are said to have seen God and trembled at his presence (v. 16).²⁵ This text does not say that God walked on the water, but rather moved through it. Nevertheless, the text demonstrates YHWH's sovereignty over the sea. Closely related to this passage is Isa 43:16: "Thus says YHWH, who gives a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters." Unlike Ps 77, this text does not depict God as moving through the waters; he makes the water crossable for his people, which is another aspect of the sea-walking account.²⁶ Isa 51:9-10 combines the motif of God subduing the sea monster Rahab with God's making of a way through the sea at the Exodus deliverance. In a less dramatic context, God's control of the sea appears in Wis 14:1-4 to demonstrate that, although men can build ships and navigate the sea, it is the providence of God that protects the sailors and leads them through the sea.²⁷

There are also some passages in which God's absolute power over the water is associated with or transferred to the Wisdom of God.²⁸ In Proverbs 8, divine Wisdom describes herself as being present beside God "as a master craftsman" when he set limits for the sea (Prov 8:29-30; cf. Job 38:8-11). YHWH's deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea is also ascribed to Wisdom in Wis 10:17-18: "She made them pass through the Red Sea, and she led them through deep waters." Closer to our passage, when Wisdom praises herself in Sirach 24 she makes known that she has "walked on [or in] the deep abyss [ἐν βάθει ἀβύσσων περιεπάτησα]" (24:5), that is, on the bottom of the sea or in the depths of the sea, and that she holds sway on the

²⁵ Mark uses the same word for the fear of the disciples (6:50): ἐταράχθησαν.

²⁶ The disciples have been on the lake for most of the night without being able to reach the other side. They seem to leave land in the early evening (6:45-47) and have only reached the middle of sea when Jesus sees them at the time of the fourth watch of the night (6:48). It is only at the intervention of Jesus they are able to get to the other side.

²⁷ *Odes Sol.* 39 is sometimes mentioned in this context. The ode describes how "the Lord" bridges the rivers by his word and walks on them so that even the footprints remain on the waters. However, it cannot be excluded that this text is influenced by the tradition of Jesus walking on the water. It is thus of less value for the pre-Christian understanding of YHWH's power over the waters.

²⁸ See esp. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:915-16.

waves of the sea (ἐν κύμασιν θαλάσσης).²⁹ However, the passage does not ascribe to Wisdom walking on the sea.

Finally, we look at 2 Macc 5:21. This often overlooked passage is of great importance to understand the significance of Jesus' walking on the water, as it sheds some light on the contemporary Jewish understanding of the walking on water motif. The passage in question occurs shortly after Antiochus Epiphanes has entered the temple of Jerusalem:

So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried away to Antioch, *thinking in his arrogance that he could sail on the land and walk on the sea* [καὶ τὸ πέλαγος πορευτὸν θέσθαι], because his mind was elated.

The vocabulary here is different from Mark so there cannot be any direct dependence. Its importance lies in that the author chooses the sea walking motif when attributing to Antiochus an arrogance that amounts to a claim to divinity.³⁰

This is made clear when this imagery is picked up again in chapter 9:

Thus *he who had just been thinking* that he could command the waves of the sea [τῆς θαλάσσης κύμασιν ἐπιτάσσειν], in his superhuman arrogance, (2 Macc 9:8)

We have already discussed this passage and its implication for the storm-stilling account.³¹ What should be noted here is the reference back to 5:21.³² There are no other references to Antiochus' imagined ability to rule the sea in 2 Maccabees, so it must also implicitly refer to walking on water. It follows then that what was true about Antiochus' claim to command the waves of the sea is also true of his imagined ability to walk on water, that is, a claim to be equal to God (9:12), a claim that was regarded as blasphemy by the author of 2 Maccabees (9:28). Walking on water is not

²⁹ The following “ἐν the whole earth” shows that it means on the top of the waves.

³⁰ Berg, *Rezeption*, 83; R. Kratz, *Rettungswunder: Motiv-, traditions- und formkritische Aufarbeitung einer biblischen Gattung* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979), 112, observes that behind this text lies the idea that authority over the powers of nature is a prerogative of God. T. Africa, “Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History,” *CIA* 1 (1982): 1-17, 9, suggests an allusion to Xerxes, who dug an unnecessary channel near Mount Athos in addition to his bridging of the Hellespont (Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.24, 36-37). This would not, of course, exclude that the Jewish understanding of walking on water as a prerogative of YHWH is also found in the background.

³¹ See 4.3.

³² Cf. D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 257: “the first clause echoes 5:21.”

only regarded as a prerogative reserved for God, but human imagination of this ability is seen as blasphemous.³³

A number of OT and Second Temple texts, then, in a variety of ways, ascribe total sovereignty over the waters to YHWH, often in his capacity as creator. Some of these depict God as traveling on the water. The text that most closely resembles Mark's account of Jesus' walking on the sea is LXX Job 9:8, which both conceptually and linguistically is so close to Mark that one suspects an allusion on the part of Mark. That walking on water is a divine prerogative reserved for YHWH is born out not only by the fact that the OT and the Jewish tradition attribute this ability to God alone and never to a human, but also that 2 Maccabees seems to equate a claim to have this ability with a claim to be equal to God. When Job 9:8 states that God "*alone* stretched out the heavens and walked on the sea as if on ground" it confirms the rest of the evidence we have: only YHWH, the God of Israel can walk on the sea.³⁴

6.3. *Passing by*

We have observed that God's rule over the water often appears in OT theophanies, and also that Mark seems to echo the language of Job 9 in his description of Jesus' movement on the water. These two insights may help to explain the perplexing phrase ἤθελε παρελθεῖν αὐτοὺς (6:48) that has long puzzled the exegetes.³⁵ Why does Jesus wish to pass by his disciples when everything in the narrative suggests that Jesus is coming to help his exhausted disciples? There have, of course, been attempts to solve the problem by attributing to ἤθελεν and παρελθεῖν meaning other than the normal or by arguing that the words are to be understood from the disciples' point of view.³⁶ But the explanation which has gained support from the

³³ Without drawing attention to the link between 9:8 and 5:21, Aus concludes that Antiochus in 5:21 is described "as considering himself a god" (*Walking*, 122). This link is also present in Josephus' comments about Caligula's attempt to imitate Xerxes (see n. 16 above).

³⁴ It is significant that Mark uses the term θάλασσα rather than λίμνη of the Lake of Galilee. E. S. Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," *JBL* 103 (1984): 363-77, points out that this "serves well its narrative and theological purposes. Though *limnē* is more geographically precise, the more ambiguous *thalassa* is rich in connotation from the Hebrew scriptures" (376; cf. 364).

³⁵ Note that Matthew does not include it in his account. For a detailed survey of various explanations, see T. Snoy, "Marc 6,48: '...et il voulait dépasser': Proposition pour la solution d'une énigme," in *L'Evangile selon Marc* (ed. M. Sabbe; BETL 34; Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1974): 347-63; for a brief overview, see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:916-17.

³⁶ See e.g., Cranfield, *Mark*, 226; H. Fleddermann, "'And He Wanted to Pass by Them' (Mark 6:48c)," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 389-95; France, *Mark*, 272.

majority of exegetes over the past years is the one proposed by Lohmeyer.³⁷ He pointed to the use of the verb *παρέρχομαι* (MT: עָבַר) in the theophanies experienced by Moses and Elijah in Exodus 33-34 and 1 Kings 19, and argued that “to pass by” is an element belonging to the divine epiphany in the OT, especially in the LXX.³⁸ In the Exodus account, the term appears no less than four times. When Moses asks YHWH to show him his glory (33:18), God promises that his goodness (33:19), he himself (33:22), and his glory (33:22) shall pass by. This promise comes to fulfillment when YHWH passes by Moses in 34:6. In a similar manner, 1 Kings recounts how YHWH passes by Elijah at Horeb (1 Kgs 19:11). In these narratives then “passing by” does not mean “withdrawal,” but “expresses one of the ways in which God appears or comes to men. It signifies the manner by which God makes himself visible and shows himself to human eyes.”³⁹ In fact, it seems that “to pass by” under the impact of these accounts became almost a technical term for a divine epiphany in the Septuagint.⁴⁰

Read against this usage of *παρέρχομαι* in the LXX, the tension between Jesus’ coming to the disciples and his intent to pass by is resolved. The verb does not express an action opposed to “coming to,” but Jesus’ intent to draw near to reveal himself to his disciples, as YHWH did to reveal himself to Moses and Elijah.⁴¹ The probability of this interpretation is considerably strengthened by the notable similarities between YHWH’s epiphanic action in Exodus 33-34 and Jesus’ epiphanic action on the sea of Galilee.⁴² YHWH descends to Moses, stands with him, passes before him, and proclaims his identity in a reassurance formula: “YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger ...” (33:18-4:6). Likewise, Jesus

³⁷ “‘Und Jesus ging vorüber’: Eine exegetische Betrachtung,” *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* 23 (1934): 206-24. Reprinted in his *Urchristliche Mystik: Neutestamentlichen Studien* (Darmstadt: Hermann Gentner, 1956), 57-79. With the exception of France, who criticizes it, and Hurtado, Hooker, and Lührmann who fail to mention it, all recent commentaries I have consulted adopt this interpretation. For this position, see also e.g., H. Ritt, “Der ‘Seewandel Jesu’ (Mk 6,45-52 par): Literarische und theologische Aspekte,” *BZ* 23 (1979): 71-84; Heil, *Walking*; Fleddermann, “And He Wanted”; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*; Meier, *Marginal Jew*; Madden, *Walking*.

³⁸ Lohmeyer also cited Gen 32:32 LXX; 2 Kgdms 23:3-4; and Dan 12:1 LXX.

³⁹ Heil, *Walking*, 69.

⁴⁰ So e.g., Heil, *Walking*, 70; Marcus, *Mark*, 426. The LXX version of Jacob’s wrestling with God states that the *face of God* passed by as the sun rose upon Jacob (LXX Gen 32:32) whereas the MT has *Jacob* passing by Penuel (MT Gen 32:31). Likewise, LXX Dan 12:1 uses *παρέρχομαι* to describe the coming or arising (MT: עָמַד) of Michael. This does not imply, however, that this verb always has this connotation in the LXX.

⁴¹ Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 149.

⁴² See esp. Heil, *Walking*, 69; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:917.

comes to his disciples, walking on the sea, intends to pass by them, before he finally proclaims his identity and reassures his disciples: θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε (Mark 6:50).

Not all have been persuaded by this interpretation, however. Snoy, although more attracted to Lohmeyer's explanation than any other, objects that if Mark's account was based on the Sinai and Horeb theophanies there would be more points of contact between the narratives.⁴³ Instead, he wants to see Jesus' intent to pass by as one more example of the Markan messianic secret. He points to Mark's use of imperfect ἦθελεν which in two instances refers to Jesus' desire to remain hidden (7:24; 9:30), and the fact that an element of revelation often goes hand in hand with an element of concealment in Mark (1:43-45; 7:36). This phenomenon appears in the present passage; Jesus first provokes an epiphany by walking on the water, but then in an attempt to remain unrecognized, he intends to pass by his disciples.

Several objections can be raised against this thesis, however.⁴⁴ First, as Blackburn notes, Mark's sea walking account "does not represent the transference of any one O.T. theophany to Jesus, but rather a *Verschmelzung* of theophanic motifs (or at least actions of Yahweh) occurring in various contexts in the O.T."⁴⁵ Second, it seems doubtful that this passage has anything to do with the secrecy motif. Elsewhere in Mark, Jesus never attempts to conceal his identity from his disciples (three of them are indeed present at the Transfiguration) and Mark actually faults the disciples for not having realized the true identity of Jesus (6:51-52). Why would he do that if Jesus imposes the messianic secret on himself? We may also ask why Jesus wanted his disciples to see someone at all, if the identity of the figure was to remain hidden. In contrast to Lohmeyer's solution, Snoy's thesis raises more questions than it answers.⁴⁶

⁴³ Snoy, "Marc 6,48," 360-63.

⁴⁴ Heil, *Walking*, 72; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 149-50.

⁴⁵ Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 149.

⁴⁶ B. M. F. van Iersel, "KAI ELETHEN PARELTHEIN AUTOUS: Another Look at Mk 6.48d," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck et al.; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2:1065-76, agreeing with Snoy's objections to Lohmeyer, also questions that a theophany takes place at all in Mark (1068). As is the case with Snoy, he desires more extensive links between the Sinai and Horeb theophanies and Mark. For example, he objects that Jesus did not show himself only from behind or that the disciples could see Jesus face without dying (cf. Exod 33:20). Quite surprising in light of Jesus' sea walking and the Jewish understanding of this motif, he even goes so far as to claim that "Jesus never does anything in Mark that unmistakably refers to the performance of a divine action" (1071). Instead of Snoy's messianic secret interpretation, he proposes that Jesus' intent in passing by was to walk ahead and take up his normal position in front

Yet, I am not convinced that this is all Mark wished to say. There is namely a statement about God passing by in Job 9 as well,⁴⁷ only a few verses after the image of God walking on water. The context and meaning of the passing by is slightly different from the passages surveyed above, but it may nevertheless have some significance for the correct understanding of Mark's mysterious statement.

Behold, he passes by me [MT: עָבַר; LXX: ὑπερβῆ με], and I see him not; he moves on [MT: חָלַל; LXX: παρέλθῃ με], but I do not perceive [or understand; MT: בִּיַּן; LXX: ἔγνων] him. (Job 9:11)

God's sovereignty over the entire creation, which includes his ability to walk on the sea, is linked with a confession of the human inability to see and understand God. God's "passing by" is here as Hays puts it, "a metaphor for our inability to grasp his power."⁴⁸ Unlike in Exodus 33-34 and 1 Kings 19, the LXX here does not render עָבַר with παρέρχομαι, but reserves this verb for the next clause. Perhaps this has some significance for Mark, for παρέρχομαι now goes with a verb which in both the Hebrew and the Greek text very well can be translated "understand." This fits nicely with the Markan emphasis on the disciples' failure to grasp Jesus' identity. Although they *see* Jesus coming and walking on the water, they fail to understand who he really is (6:51-52).

Thus, by the enigmatic words about Jesus' intention to pass by, I contend, Mark conveyed his understanding of Jesus' sea-walking as a theophany, which revealed Jesus to the disciples in a similar manner to that by which YHWH showed himself in the OT.⁴⁹ But at the same time he also "said something about the difficulty of perceiving the divinity of Jesus."⁵⁰

of the disciples again (cf. 8:34; 10:32; 14:28). It is not impossible that this may be a part of the intention. The disciples would in that case indeed see Jesus from behind!

⁴⁷ In view of the fact that interpreters of Mark's sea-walking account almost without exception refers to Job 9:8, it is surprising that this passage often goes unnoticed. I have only been able to find it referenced in Lane, *Mark*, 236; Berg, *Rezeption*, 329; Guelich, *Mark*, 351; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 149 n. 255; Gundry, *Mark*, 336; Collins, "Rulers," 227; Hays, "Can the Gospels," 410; Edwards, *Mark*, 198-99; Boring, *Mark*, 190. Heil mentions it, but attaches no significance to it (*Walking*, 57 n. 71).

⁴⁸ Hays, "Can the Gospels," 410.

⁴⁹ For the sea as the place of definitive divine disclosure in later Jewish tradition, see W. R. Stegner, "Jesus' Walking on the Water: Mark 6:45-52," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 224-28.

⁵⁰ Collins, "Rulers," 227. Hays similarly concludes that "Mark's mysterious statement in Mark 6:48, read as an allusion to the Exodus theophany, suggests simultaneously that Jesus' walking on the water is a manifestation of divine glory and that it remains indirect and beyond full comprehension" ("Can the Gospels," 411). Edwards, *Mark*, 198-99, also attaches great significance to Job 9:11, but stresses that Jesus makes the enigmatic God of Job visible and palpable.

6.4. *Ego Eimi*

If Jesus' walking is placed at the centre of the pericope, its climax is certainly Jesus' use of the self-designation ἐγώ εἰμι (6:50).⁵¹ The immediate and obvious function of these words is, of course, to identify the unknown figure who is walking on the sea: "It is I."⁵² At the level of narrative, this must be the primary meaning. The disciples think they see a ghost, but Jesus assures them that it is he. In conjunction with all the other elements of divine epiphany, however, especially the sea-walking motif, there are good reasons to think that Jesus' words also echo the divine "I am" in the OT.⁵³ The words not only rule out the ghost theory, they actually identify Jesus with the figure who demonstrates a uniquely divine power over the creation by walking on the sea: "I am he."

Although most interpreters agree that there is more to the ἐγώ εἰμι than merely a self-identification, there are some questions in regard to the background against which we should interpret this bipartite formula.⁵⁴ Interpreters often link it with the burning bush episode in Exod 3:14, where God reveals his name and explains it as meaning "I am who I am [אֲנִי אֶשְׁרֵא אֶהְיֶה]". Significantly, the first of the Hebrew words is immediately used as a form of the name: "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM [אֶהְיֶה] has sent me to you.'" It is thus possible that Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι should be read as an allusion to this divine self-revelation. What speaks against this interpretation, however, is that the LXX does not translate "I am" in Exod 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι. The LXX has ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν and ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με. Thus, if there is a direct allusion to this passage it would be to the Hebrew text.

This is, however, not the only the possible explanation. In the LXX, the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι is used to translate Hebrew אֲנִי הוּא (often rendered "I am he") in

⁵¹ So Ritt, "Seewandel Jesu," 81.

⁵² Among exegetes who think this is the only meaning are Taylor, *Mark* 330; J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 31; France, *Mark*, 273, n. 71.

⁵³ This seems to be the view of most exegetes dealing with this pericope. In some older commentaries this is taken as the primary indication of a high christology in this narrative (e.g., Grundmann, *Markus*, 143; Gärtner, *Markus*, 173).

⁵⁴ On this, see esp. C. H. Williams, *I am He: The Interpretation of 'Ani Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 2:113; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000) and R. J. Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 157-59.

Deut 32:39 and several passages in Isaiah 40-55.⁵⁵ In Deut 32:39, the formula appears in the distinctly monotheistic declaration, “Behold, I, even I am he; there is no god except me [LXX: ἴδετε ἴδετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ οὐκ θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ].” The same monotheistic pattern is visible in Isaiah 40-55 where the formula plays a central role in the recurring assertions of YHWH’s uniqueness and sovereignty as creator and saviour, for example Isa 43:10-11:

... that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he [ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι]. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am YHWH, and besides me there is no saviour.

In these passages the phrase functions as “a divine self-declaration, which encapsulates Yahweh’s claim to unique and exclusive divinity.”⁵⁶ One often sees the commentaries referring to the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι as “die alttestamentliche Offenbarungsformel,”⁵⁷ but in view of its usage in Deuteronomy and Isaiah we should probably rather speak of a *divine self-declaration* than a self-revelatory formula.⁵⁸ אֲנִי אֲנִי or its Greek equivalent is not another divine name;⁵⁹ it serves as a self-declaration of YHWH’s absolute uniqueness.⁶⁰ The function of the “I am” is thus the same as in the sea-walking passages we looked at earlier; it serves to demonstrate that YHWH and no other is divine.⁶¹

That the primary background of ἐγὼ εἰμι in our passage is to be found in these אֲנִי אֲנִי/ἐγὼ εἰμι passages is considerably strengthened by the striking parallels between Mark’s account of Jesus’ sea-walking and Isa 43:1-13, which combines an absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι statement (two occurrences of Hebrew אֲנִי אֲנִי),

⁵⁵ According to Bauckham (“Monotheism,” 158-59), the LXX has ἐγὼ εἰμι in three instances (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10), the same number of instances as in Mark (6:5; 13:6; 14:62), and the double ἐγὼ εἰμι ἐγὼ εἰμι four times (Isa 43:25; 45:18; 46:4; 51:12). The MT has אֲנִי אֲנִי seven times (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6) and the emphatic אֲנִי אֲנִי twice (43:25; 51:12).

⁵⁶ Bauckham, “Monotheism,” 158. Similarly, Williams, *Interpretation*, 41.

⁵⁷ E.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 1:361-62, Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:270; Guelich, *Mark*, 351; Stein, *Mark*, 325, following H. Zimmermann, “Das absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι als die neutestamentliche Offenbarungsformel,” *BZ* 4 (1960): 54-69, 266-76.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Interpretation*, 23-50, 223-24.

⁵⁹ Cf. e.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 93-96.

⁶⁰ Williams, *Interpretation*, 41.

⁶¹ Cf. S. M. McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos: Rev. 1:4 in its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting* (WUNT 2:107; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1999), 172: “the phrase is closely associated with YHWH’s uniqueness; his saving activity on behalf of his people; his creative activity; and his eternal being.”

with the *Trostformel* μὴ φοβοῦ, the motif of crossing water, and salvation, all of which are present in Mark:⁶²

v 1: *Fear not* [LXX: μὴ φοβοῦ], for I have redeemed you.

v 2a: When you pass through the water, I will be with you, the rivers shall not overwhelm you.

v 3a For I am YHWH, your God.

v 5 *Fear not*, for I am with you.

v 10 You are my witnesses ... that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he [MT: אֲנִי יְהוָה; LXX: ἐγὼ εἰμι]. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.

v 11 I, I am YHWH [MT: אֲנִי יְהוָה; LXX: ἐγὼ ὁ θεός], and besides me there is no savior.

v 12b-13 I am God, and also henceforth I am [MT: אֲנִי יְהוָה]; there is none who can deliver from my hand: I work and who can hinder it?

The divine self-declaration also appears in the other Isaiah passage which uses the image of God's power over the water (51:9-16). In this case, the LXX has a double ἐγὼ εἰμι (51:12). In view of the occurrence of ἐγὼ εἰμι in passages which speak of YHWH's dominance of waters, as well as the fact that all instances except one of the divine self-declaration appears in a OT book which certainly has influenced Mark, it is probable that Jesus' words should be interpreted against this background, rather than the interpretation of God's name in Exodus 3.⁶³

If this is correct, it means that Jesus applies one of the strongest assertions of monotheism in the OT to *himself*. This has considerable implications for Mark's christology. On the one hand, it means that Jewish monotheism is maintained. There is only one God, the God of Israel, YHWH (cf. Mark 12:29). On the other hand, it also implies that Jesus is *not* a second divine figure beside YHWH, but somehow

⁶² Cf. Heil, *Walking*, 59.

⁶³ Some exegetes prefer to read the "I am" statement against the background of occurrences of ἐγὼ εἰμι in Exodus (3:14 and the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος in 14:4 and 18) because of the influence Exodus 14-15 may have had on the Markan sea narrative. Stegner, "Walking," 212-34, detects a number of parallels, including key words, phrases, and structural parallels. However, even if Exodus 14-15 has influenced Mark's telling of the narrative, and the linking of the sea walking narrative with the miraculous feeding seems in fact to imply this, even if in the reversed order, this does not exclude that the background of the "I am" statement is to be sought in Isaiah's new Exodus where the formula actually is present. We have already seen how Mark combines various theophanic motifs and divine actions from various parts of the OT contexts. Whether the "I am" statement ultimately goes back to Exod 3:14 is another question. Williams, *Interpretation*, 52-54, argues that the link is absent in the Hebrew Bible.

closely identified with the one God of Israel.⁶⁴ Jesus does not only act as God only can by walking on the sea, he even applies the divine self-identification to himself.⁶⁵

6.5. Additional Motifs

There are several other elements in Mark 6:45-52 which could be interpreted as either theophanic or actions normally reserved for YHWH. Some of them are more relevant than others. They are here listed in order of appearance rather than in order of importance.

In the first place, Mark mentions that Jesus was on *the* mountain (τὸ ὄρος) before coming to the rescue of his disciples (6:46). This may echo YHWH's descent from Mount Sinai or Mount Seir in three significant OT theophanic texts (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4-5; Hab 3:3).⁶⁶ In favor of this association is not only the general presence of theophanic motifs in the narrative, but also the fact that Mark precedes "mountain" with a definite article, which may indicate that the mountain has symbolic importance.⁶⁷ As the Transfiguration narrative demonstrates, Mark associates the mountain with theophanies.⁶⁸ However, Mark does not explicitly say that Jesus comes down from the mountain. The narration of Jesus' coming to his disciples is immediately preceded by the note that Jesus was on the land (6:47). So the mentioning of the mountain may only serve to highlight the place of Jesus' prayer.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Pesch has put it nicely: "Die Klärung der Identität des Erscheinenden geschieht doppelbödig *theologisch*: In dem auf Meer einerschreitenden irdischen Jesus (ἐγὼ εἰμι als Identitätsproklamation) wird *Jahwe epiphan* (ἐγὼ εἰμι als Offenbarungsformel)" (*Markus*, 1:362). I would prefer "Selbstaussage Gottes" instead of "Offenbarungsformel" for the reasons stated above. Cf. also Marcus, *Mark*, 432: "Although ... Mark never explicitly says that Jesus is divine, he comes very close to doing so here."

⁶⁵ Thus I cannot agree with Heil who states that Jesus is not "directly identifying himself with YHWH [...]. Rather he is identifying himself with the revelation of Yahweh's will to save, which is now taking place in his action of walking on the sea" (*Walking*, 80). But he is right that Jesus does not attribute the Divine name to himself (*Walking*, 59). Contrast Berg, *Rezeption*, 327: "Nicht nur in seinem Handeln (Wandeln auf dem Meer), sondern auch in seinem Reden, in seinem Anspruch, wird Jesus in der Rolle Jahwes dargestellt" and further "Im 'Ich bin es' offenbart sich Jesus [...] als der einzige heilsmächtige Retter; er sagt sich selbst als *der* Heilsbringer zu" (332).

⁶⁶ Pesch, *Markus*, 1:360; Ritt, "Seewandel Jesu," 79; Gnika, *Markus*, 1:268; Guelich, *Mark*, 349; Gundry, *Mark*, 342; cautiously Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 145-46.

⁶⁷ Marcus, *Mark*, 422-23.

⁶⁸ See chapter 7 below.

⁶⁹ Heil, *Walking*, 33, 68.

Second, Mark seems to attribute a miraculous seeing to Jesus.⁷⁰ Despite the darkness (it was night) and the distance (the boat was in the middle of the sea), he sees the disciples in their distress. It is not only a matter of seeing the boat (contrast Matt 14:24); Mark says that he saw the disciples “being tortured” (βασανιζομένων) in their rowing. Thus even if it was full moon, which Mark does not narrate, it would be humanly impossible to see the distress of the disciples. This motif may then reflect God’s seeing of his people in distress (e.g., Exod 3:7).⁷¹

The next motif is the statement that Jesus came to his disciples about the fourth watch of the night, that is, between 3-6 a.m. (6:48). As the disciples set out in the evening this means that Jesus and the disciples had been separated for most of the night. But he comes to their help in the early morning. In the OT and the Jewish tradition, this is the special time of God’s help.⁷² Thus YHWH intervened against the Egyptians and saved his people in the morning watch (Exod 14:24). The Psalmist knows that God will save when the morning dawns (Ps 46:6; cf. Ps 88:13) and Isa 17:14 states that God will intervene against the threatening nations so that “before the morning, they are no more.”⁷³ Morning is also the time when YHWH reveals himself and passes by Moses (Exod 34:2, 4-6). Like YHWH, Jesus thus manifests his power in the early morning.

Fourth, the disciples reacted to Jesus’ walking on the sea in a way reminiscent of people’s reactions to theophanies: “they cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified [ἐταράχθησαν]” (6:49-50).⁷⁴ While fear is a characteristic reaction in various epiphanies, and thus not an exclusively *theophanic* element,⁷⁵ it is possible that Mark’s wording echoes Ps 77:17, one of the OT texts which describes YHWH’s appearance on the sea.⁷⁶ The verb ἐταράχθησαν is only used here in

⁷⁰ Haenchen, *Markus*, 254; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:360; Gundry, *Mark*, 336; Madden, *Walking*, 100; Marcus, *Mark*, 423; Boring, *Mark*, 189; cf. Heil, *Walking*, 69 n.92.

⁷¹ Seeing has a connotation of supernatural insight in Mark 2:5; 5:32.

⁷² E.g., Ritt, “Seewandel Jesu,” 79; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 146; Marcus, *Mark*, 423.

⁷³ See also *Jos. Asen.* 14:1-2; *L.A.B.* 42:3.

⁷⁴ Cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 336: “the theophany is so overpowering that everyone in the boat falls under its sway.”

⁷⁵ For fear as a reaction to angelophanies and christophanies in the NT, see Heil, *Walking*, 11-12. For the motif of fear in the OT and the early Jewish literature, see the survey in T. Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 128; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 48-67. See also the discussion of the storm-stilling account above.

⁷⁶ Heil, *Walking*, 57-58.

Mark, and the verb form is exactly the same as in LXX Ps 76:17.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Psalm states that the waters *saw* God:

εἶδοσάν σε ὕδατα, ὁ θεός, εἶδοσάν σε ὕδατα καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν, καὶ
ἐταράχθησαν ἄβυσσοι, πλήθος ἡχους ὑδάτων.

The disciples thus react to Jesus in the same way as the waters react to YHWH.⁷⁸ They see and are terrified.⁷⁹

Fifth, the words Jesus utters in response to the disciples' overwhelming fear, θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε (6:50), are also typical of various types of epiphanies. They appear in angelophanies in both the OT and the NT, in christophanies of the NT, as well as in non-epiphanic contexts.⁸⁰ However, encouragement not to fear is also common when God or the Angel of YHWH addresses people, often in combination with the words ἐγὼ εἰμι.⁸¹ We have already seen that an allusion to the divine "I am" in Isaiah 40-55 is probable. This and the general influence of Isaiah on Mark make it probable that Jesus' words, μὴ φοβεῖσθε, reflect YHWH's μὴ φοβοῦ in Isaiah.⁸² Isa 35:4 which combines these words with God's own coming to save his people may indeed be in view.⁸³

⁷⁷ The verb is employed in various contexts in the LXX, often in reactions to dreams. See e.g., Gen 19:16; 40:6; 41:8; Ps 2:5; Dan 2:1; 7:15. It is also used of the waters in LXX Ps 45 (v.4) which, as we noted above, also tells of God's salvation before the morning.

⁷⁸ J. Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (2nd rev. and enl. ed.; WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977), 27-28, notes that both Hebrew verbs used to express the fear of the water and the deep (לָרַחַץ; לָרַחַץ) are characteristic of theophanies. In difference from the MT the Tg. Ps 77:17 says that the theophany is seen by the *people* and that *they* trembled. See Heil, *Walking*, 57.

⁷⁹ Whether the disciples think they see a "ghost" is not clear, even though the fact that Mark says that the disciples *thought* they saw a φάντασμα probably indicates that it represents something different from the theophany they were witnessing. See J. R. Combs, "A Ghost on Water?: Understanding an Absurdity in Mark 6:49-50," *JBL* 127 (2008):345-58, 348. Combs, however, notes that there are no ancient accounts of ghosts walking on water. The noun φάντασμα is used only here and in the Matthean parallel (14:26) in the NT. It can mean "apparition," "ghost," or "vision." But it should be pointed out that Josephus employs φάντασμα to describe the Angel of God (*Ant.* 1.331-34 on Gen 32:22-32), the appearance of YHWH in the burning bush (*Ant.* 3:62; cf. Exod 3:2), and the Angel of the Lord (*Ant.* 5.213 on Judg 6:11-24). The cognate verb, φαντάζω, is found in Heb 12:21 and refers to the theophany at Sinai (Exod 19).

⁸⁰ E.g., Dan 10:12 LXX; Matt 28:5, 10; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10. The combination of both verbs appear in Holofernes' address of Judith: θάρσυσον, γύναι, μὴ φοβηθῆς... (Jdt 11:1). Several texts are cited by Collins, *Mark*, 334-35.

⁸¹ E.g., Gen 15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 46:3; Isa 35:4; 41:10, 13-14; 43:1, 5; 44:8; LXX Jer 1:8, 17; 26:28; 49:11.

⁸² So esp. Boring, *Mark*, 190.

⁸³ O. Hofius, "Jesu Zuspruch der Sündenvergebung: Exegetische Erwägungen zu Mk 2,5 b," in *Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT 132; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2000), 38-56, 48, n. 37. Many of

The final element which seems to put Jesus in the role of God is the ceasing of the wind. In contrast to Mark 4:35-41, where the entire focus of the episode is on the threat of the severe storm, Mark here only mentions that the disciples were “being tortured” because the wind was against them. The severity of the headwind, however, is implied by the fact that the disciples have spent all the night rowing without being able to reach the other side.⁸⁴ Again, in contrast to the storm-stilling episode, Mark does not explicitly say that Jesus made the storm be still. But a number of things point to this.⁸⁵ First, the mentioning of how Jesus sees the difficulties of his disciples implies that he sets out to help them to overcome this difficulty.⁸⁶ Second, Jesus shows his power over the wind already while walking on the sea towards the boat. For, while the disciples have been working hard all night against the wind, Jesus easily overcomes the distance that separates them.⁸⁷ Third, the linking of the wind ceasing with Jesus’ entrance in the boat and the reaction of the disciples (“they were exceedingly amazed” [6:51]) caused by this and directed towards Jesus rather than God point to Jesus as the agent of the storm stilling. Finally, the reader who has already learned about Jesus’ ability to dominate the wind and the waves can easily infer that it is caused by Jesus here as well. This may indeed be the reason why Mark does not explicitly ascribe it to Jesus here.⁸⁸ Jesus thus completes the rescue of his disciples and the divine epiphany by demonstrating his powers, not only over the water but also over the wind. Jesus is again shown to be the one who wind and sea obey (4:41).

6.6. Conclusion

To a greater extent than any other passages in Mark, this brief narrative transfers motifs associated with YHWH in the OT and the Jewish tradition to Jesus. Not all of the elements may be convincing on their own, but the overall impression of the

the miracles Jesus performs are those promised in Isa 35:5-6, a passage which is alluded to in Mark 7:37.

⁸⁴ There is thus no contradiction between vv. 47 and 48 (contra Madden, *Walking*, 100-101). This is Mark’s way of indicating the force of the wind.

⁸⁵ Contra e.g., Lane, *Mark*, 237, who thinks the ceasing of the wind can be ascribed to “natural causes.”

⁸⁶ For the narrative as a sea-rescue, see esp. Heil, *Walking*.

⁸⁷ Heil, *Walking*, 65, attributes Jesus’ power over the wind to his walking on the sea.

⁸⁸ Scholars taking this position include Pesch, *Markus*, 1:362; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 214; Stein, *Mark*, 327.

narrative is a theophany with Jesus in the role of YHWH or, from a Greco-Roman perspective, one of the gods.⁸⁹ Few scholars would dispute this. When it comes to the implications of the narrative, however, there is much less agreement. Is Jesus here portrayed as a human being acting with the power of God or is he in some way also closely identified with God himself? Heil, for example, seems to take the former position. Although throughout his study he observes how the portrait of Jesus corresponds to the portrait of YHWH in the OT, he excludes the view that Jesus is identified with YHWH. In his view Jesus is “equipped with absolute divine power.”⁹⁰ His choice of language may be his way of (rightly) maintaining a clear distinction between Jesus and God, but the mere attribution of “divine power” to Jesus fails in my view to do full justice to Mark’s exalted portrait. To be true, Mark does not explicitly say that Jesus is divine, but walking on the sea is a uniquely divine power reserved for God in the Jewish literature. Furthermore, for a human to claim this capacity is a claim to be divine, probably even regarded as blasphemous by the Jews.⁹¹ As Mark maintains monotheism, the attribution of this power to Jesus would seem to place him on the divine side of the creator/creation divide. But, as we also noted, the association of Jesus with God is not restricted to Jesus’ acting. In proclaiming his identity with the divine self-declaration ἐγὼ εἰμι, he also speaks like God. This is more than a mere attribution of a divine power; this is a proclamation of identity. Furthermore, these two elements, which are applied to Jesus, are in the biblical literature used to demonstrate the unique divinity of the God of Israel. It would seem, then, that they have the same function in Mark, to demonstrate Jesus’ divinity.⁹² But Jesus does not replace God and the two figures do not collapse

⁸⁹ Marcus, *Way*, 145 n. 62, notes a certain analogy between the portrait of Jesus here and the presentation of the man from the sea in *4 Ezra* 13. What is particularly unique about Jesus in this account, his walking on the water, is, however, not attributed to the man from the sea.

⁹⁰ Heil, *Walking*, 56, 80. Similarly E. K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority: Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 74; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 125-26. Although John’s narrative gives the impression of being more primitive than Mark’s (see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:908), Heil surprisingly concludes that the sea-walking account “substantiates his [Jesus’] claim to a divine origin” in John, whereas in Mark it shows that Jesus “the one divinely empowered for the salvation of his people” (172-73). A similar pattern can be found in Madden who labels Mark’s story an *epiphany*, but John’s a *theophany* (*Walking*, 100, 110).

⁹¹ Cf. the discussion of 2 Maccabees above.

⁹² Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 432: “the overwhelming impact made by our narrative is an impression of Jesus’ divinity.”

together. There is unity between Jesus and God, while, at the same time, a clear distinction remains.⁹³

⁹³ So rightly Berg, *Rezeption*, 339: “Wie Jahwe im Alten Testament handelt und spricht, so redet und wirkt Jesus, jedoch nicht in der Weise, dass der eine den anderen ablöst, sondern indem Jesus die Werke seines Vaters tut.” Cf. also J. D. M. Derrett, “Why and How Jesus Walked on the Sea,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 330-48, 330-31: “his actions [...] are properly understood, manifestations of YHWH personally present on earth.” Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 64, states that this passage together with the storm stilling account “points very strongly to a close identification of him with Yahweh in the OT.”

7. The Transfiguration of Jesus

7.1. Introduction

The transfiguration narrative is significant in Mark's presentation of Jesus. Positioned midway through the narrative and including the second (and probably most important) of three acclamations of Jesus as Son of God (cf. 1:11; 15:39) it forms a centerpiece in the Gospel.¹ Up to this point, various groups of people have asked about Jesus' identity (1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:3).² Peter's answer and confession, "You are the Messiah" (8:29), was no doubt correct (cf. 1:1), although insufficient.³ Jesus is not only the Messiah, he is also the Son of God (cf. Matt 16:16), something the inner circle of the twelve, as the first human characters in Mark's story, hear God declare (9:7) in the present passage. The presentation of the person of Jesus reaches a climax, but also a turning point. From the point they go down the mountain, the narrative will focus more and more on the necessary suffering of the Messiah until it again reaches a climax in the centurion's confession at the cross (15:39). The central place of the transfiguration is also indicated by a number of intra-textual links. The conversation about Elijah and John the Baptist looks back to the beginning of the Gospel, the mentioning of the resurrection points to its very end, and the glorious appearance of Jesus reminds of his future return in the glory of his Father (8:38; 13:24-27).

Despite the straightforward declaration by God that Jesus is his son, there is little agreement on what the passage has to say about Jesus' identity. Not only is the title Son of God open to more than one understanding, the polyvalent character of the narrative has led to numerous, often conflicting, interpretations. In fact, it is one of the most disputed passages in Mark. There is neither space nor need to rehearse all

¹ Cf. H. Baltensweiler, *Die Verklärung Jesu: Historisches Ereignis und synoptische Berichte* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1959), 134.

² See J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 80-85.

³ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 91-98; Edwards, *Mark*, 261. A. Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gütersloh: Mohr, 1965), 109 and E. Schweizer, "The Portrayal of the Life of Faith in the Gospel of Mark," *Int* 32 (1978): 387-99, 389-90, however, go too far in their judgments of Peter's confession. The latter is nevertheless correct that Peter does not reach "the level of the demons, who have long before recognized that Jesus is the son of God."

these here. Others have done that,⁴ and I will restrict my own comments to what is relevant for this study.

Twentieth century interpretation of this pericope epitomizes much of New Testament exegesis in general. In the first half of the century, at least in German scholarship, the key to the interpretation was thought to be found in non-Jewish Hellenism. Lohmeyer cited, for example, Greco-Roman texts about metamorphoses of gods and goddesses in order to conclude that Jesus is presented as a divine being who has taken on human form, but who now reveals his true divine nature to a few chosen ones.⁵ In contrast to this, and looking for a more Jewish setting, later scholarship has questioned that the glory Jesus radiates is a quality he possesses; it should rather be seen as an anticipation of the glory he will attain at his resurrection.⁶ Those who take this approach may point to the reflection of God's glory in the face of Moses after he has encountered God on Sinai or to the transformation of the righteous at the resurrection in the apocalyptic literature.

Unlike much earlier scholarship our present interest is, however, not with the origin of this pericope, but with the message it communicates to its audience, an audience which in all likelihood consisted of both Gentiles and Jews.⁷ Collins, who takes this approach, has recently argued that the transfiguration narrative must have had a different impact on those members of the audience that were well-versed in Greek religious traditions than those who were more at home with Jewish traditions.⁸ To the former group the description of Jesus would suggest a divine being walking

⁴ W. L. Liefeld, "Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. R.N. Longenecker and M.C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 162-65; S. S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration and the Believers' Transformation: A Study of the Transfiguration and Its Development in Early Christian Writings* (WUNT 2:265; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2009), 9-10; see also the bibliography in D. Zeller, "Bedeutung und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergrund der Verwandlung Jesu (Markus 9:2-8)" in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 303-21, 303 n. 1; for a convenient survey of the numerous *religionsgeschichtliche* parallels which have been proposed, see Marcus, *Mark*, 1108-17.

⁵ E. Lohmeyer, "Die Verklärung Jesu nach dem Markus-Evangelium," *ZNW* 21 (1922): 185-215.

⁶ Cf. e.g., H. C. Kee, "The Transfiguration in Mark: Epiphany or Apocalyptic Vision?" in *Understanding the Sacred Text* (ed. J. Reumann; Valley Forge: Judson, 1972), 135-52; Pesch, *Markus*, 2:72-74; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 99; Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 117-24; J. P. Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2-8, Matt. 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36* (AnBib 144; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2000), 92.

⁷ Cf. D. Zeller, "New Testament Christology in its Hellenistic Reception," *NTS* 46 (2001): 312-33, esp. 314-15.

⁸ A. Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *HTR* 93 (2000): 85-100, 90-92. See also in much more detail C. R. Moss, "The Transfiguration: An Exercise in Markan Accommodation," *BibInt* 12 (2004): 69-89.

on earth; the latter would understand it as a preview of his resurrection.⁹ But, this seems to me somewhat simplistic. Can we draw such a sharp line between the two groups? Is it not more likely that there was a considerable overlap in this regard and that those of a Jewish background would know a great deal about Greco-Roman traditions¹⁰ and vice versa? More importantly, is it conceivable that Mark would write in such a way that the text would lay open to different and perhaps also contradictory interpretations? If Mark adapted his writing to reach as many as possible in his audience,¹¹ did he not also make sure that he conveyed the same message to all? Thus, to anticipate the conclusion of this chapter, I agree with Collins about the implications for a Greco-Roman reader, but I also suggest that the evidence points in a similar direction from a Jewish perspective. We begin, however, by looking at the passage with Greco-Roman spectacles.

7.2. *The Transfiguration in a Greco-Roman Perspective*

In Antiquity, the gods were believed to sometimes appear on earth in human form. Numerous examples appear in the Greco-Roman literature¹² and the idea is attested also in the NT (Acts 14:11; 28:6).¹³ On these occasions the disguised god sometimes reveals his or her true identity, as for example in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*:

When she said so the goddess [Demeter] changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance wafted from her sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightening.¹⁴

⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 421.

¹⁰ Collins cites M. Hengel's challenge of the dichotomy between Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Judaism and Greek-speaking Hellenistic Judaism (*Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* [2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974]) with approval, but she nevertheless seems to maintain a rather sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles with regard to the knowledge of each others' traditions. Moss appears to take a more nuanced view ("Transfiguration," 88-89).

¹¹ As Moss argues ("Transfiguration," 74-76).

¹² E.g., Homer *Il.* 20.81-82; *Od.* 7.20; 17.485-87; 22.200-235. See J.-P. Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. F. I. Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 41-46; Moss, "Transfiguration," 76-85.

¹³ On Acts 14:11, see A. L. Wordelman, "Cultural Divides and Dual Realities: A Greco-Roman Context for Acts 14," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. T. C. Penner and C. Vander Stichele; SBLSymS 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 205-32.

¹⁴ Hesiod, *Hymn to Demeter* 275-80. Cited after Moss, "Transfiguration," 78.

The popularity of the topic is demonstrated by that, at the time of Mark, it had developed into a literary genre, most famously represented by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

According to Mark, Jesus' appearance was changed (μετεμορφώθη)¹⁵ and "his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them" (9:2-3).¹⁶ This is close to the description of Demeter where the bodily transformation also affects the clothing. The shining splendour radiating from the subject of the metamorphosis is a recurrent motif in Greco-Roman epiphanies.¹⁷ Typical is also that the divine figure, just as Jesus, appears to a select few (9:2) and that the metamorphosis causes extreme fear (9:6). Sometimes the recipient of an epiphany also offers to institute a place of worship dedicated to the deity, which, although it seems less likely, could be linked to Peter's offer to build three tabernacles (9:5).¹⁸ Another feature in these Greco-Roman stories is that while the gods can disguise their identity to human beings they are unable to prevent other beings from identifying them.¹⁹ A similar phenomenon can be detected in Mark where the demons, unlike human beings including his disciples, recognize who Jesus truly is (1:24; 3:11; 5:7).

Thus, for readers familiar with these traditions, Jesus here finally shows himself as he really is²⁰ and gives a powerful response to the repeated question about

¹⁵ The passive μετεμορφώθη is not necessarily a divine passive, i.e., indicating an act of God, as it is grammatically possible that it has medial sense: "he transformed himself." Since Jesus takes initiative to what unfolds, this is indeed a likely option. See D. Zeller, "La métamorphose de Jésus comme épiphanie (Mc 9, 2-8)," in *L'évangile explore* (ed. A. Marchadour; LD 166; Paris: Cerf, 1996), 167-86, 169.

¹⁶ It is not merely Jesus' clothing that is transformed, but Jesus himself. See France, *Mark*, 350; Boring, *Mark*, 261.

¹⁷ Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 44; Moss, "Transfiguration," 79. On these motifs, see also M. Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie* (2 vols.; WUNT 2:80; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995), 2:75-81.

¹⁸ Moss, "Transfiguration," 79-81. This is also attested in the Hebrew Bible, where a pillar is erected at the scene of a theophany (e.g., Gen 28:18; 35:14). See C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 502, n. 47.

¹⁹ Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 78-81; Moss, "Transfiguration," 82.

²⁰ That Jesus would be transformed into a divine being on this occasion (cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 1109-10) is excluded by the fact that he is already the Son of God (cf. 1:11) when the transfiguration takes place. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 118, notes the lack of evidence for a miracle-working *theios anēr* being transformed like Jesus.

his identity. This is also fully in line with how Greco-Roman readers would understand the heavenly declaration that Jesus is God's son, namely a divine being.²¹

To be sure, there are features of the Markan account which are without parallels in the Greco-Roman traditions and which can only be explained against a Jewish background, such as the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Also, unlike the metamorphoses of Antiquity, Jesus is a real human being, not merely disguising to be one, who fully participates in the human condition even unto death (cf. 9:9).²² But this would hardly exclude readers from interpreting the transfiguration as the self-manifestation of a deity.²³ Indeed, had Mark wished to avoid creating this impression he could have used another verb than μεταμορφόω, as Luke does (9:29) or put the emphasis on the face of Jesus in order to bring the description closer to that of Moses (Exod 34:29-35; cf. Matt 17:2; Luke 9:29). The question is now whether those who were more at home in the OT and Jewish traditions would draw similar implications.

7.3. The Transfiguration in a Jewish Perspective

7.3.1. Echoes of the Old Testament

It has long been noted that the transfiguration account and the stories about Moses on Sinai in Exodus 24 and 34 have a number of points in common. Jeremias enumerates these in the following way: 1) the six days (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:16); 2) three witnesses (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:1, 9); 3) ascent of the mountain (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:9, 12-13); 4) transfiguration (Mark 9:2-3; Exod 34:29); 5) God's presence in clouds (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:15-16, 18); 6) God speaking (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:16).²⁴ To these Stegner adds Peter's words about making three booths (9:5) which he thinks may reflect God's command to make a sanctuary (25:8; the same word in the LXX) and the parallel between the fear of the people at the theophany at Sinai (Exod 20:18) and the disciples' fear (9:6).²⁵ Another striking detail is that the verb συλλαλέω, which

²¹ Collins, "Mark and His Readers," 92.

²² Not all early Christian interpretations of this story maintain Jesus' full humanity, however. See *Acts John* 90.

²³ So also e.g., S. Schulz, *Die Stunde der Botschaft* (Hamburg: Fursche-Verlag, 1970), 57-58; Ernst, *Markus*, 257; Gundry, *Mark*, 458; Zeller, "Verwandlung," 315-16; Collins, "Mark and His Readers," 92; L. Schenke, "Gibt es im Markusevangelium eine Präexistenzchristologie?" *ZNW* 91 (2000): 45-71, 62; Moss, "Transfiguration," 88-89; Lee, *Transfiguration*, 27.

²⁴ J. Jeremias, "Μωϋσῆς," *TDNT* 4: 869, n. 228; see also Marcus, *Way*, 82.

²⁵ W. R. Stegner, "The Use of Scripture in Two Narratives of Early Jewish Christianity (Matthew 4.1-11; Mark 9.2-8)," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and*

occurs only here in Mark, is also found in Exod 34:35 describing Moses' conversation with God. These passages cannot, however, account for all the details. It is generally agreed that God's command to listen to Jesus alludes to Deut 18:15, though I shall presently challenge that view. Furthermore, the mentioning of Elijah recalls both his own encounter with God on Sinai/Horeb (1 Kgs 19) and his return before the day of YHWH (Mal 3 and 4), which Mark alluded to in the opening verses of the Gospel. The declaration "This is my beloved Son" (9:8) is thought to reflect Ps 2:7 and Gen 22. Finally, some scholars think the people's reaction to Jesus coming down from the mountain (Mark 9:15) is analogous to the Israelites' reaction in Exod 34:29-30.²⁶

Some of these parallels are, however, somewhat dubious.²⁷ For example, the six days refer to the period the cloud covered the mountain in Exodus, whereas in Mark Jesus went up after six days. The three witnesses in Exodus 24:1, 9 are in reality three plus 70, and the second time Moses goes up he only brings Joshua (24:13). Jesus is transfigured on the mountain in the presence of the witnesses and without any prior encounter with God, whereas the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mountain after he had been talking with God. Thus, while there are clear echoes of the Exodus accounts, these are sometimes more distant than is often maintained and in several cases function in a different way.

What is the Christological significance of this? Is Jesus being presented as the new Moses, as some scholars have argued?²⁸ In the light of that all the wrong answers given to the question about Jesus' identity were prophets (8:28; cf. also 6:14-15), this seems to be a somewhat dubious option already at the outset,²⁹

Proposals (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 98-120, 114-17.

²⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 82-83. Cf. the critique by O. Hofius, "Die Allmacht des Sohnes Gottes und das Gebet des Glaubens: Erwägungen zu Thema und Aussage der Wundererzählung Mk 9,14-29," *ZTK* 101 (2004): 117-137, 118-19.

²⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 475-76; J. E. Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels," in idem, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (NTOA 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 71-97, 76-78; M. Öhler, "Die Verklärung (Mk 9.1-8): Die Ankunft der Herrschaft Gottes auf der Erde," *NovT* 38 (1996): 197-217, 202-04; Zeller, "Verwandlung," 312-13.

²⁸ Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 119; Marcus, *Way*, 80-92 (but Marcus has apparently changed his view in the commentary [see *Mark*, 640]); more cautiously France, *Mark*, 353.

²⁹ See esp. M. D. Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?": A Look at St Mark's Account of the Transfiguration," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 59-70, 62-63.

especially when one of the incorrect proposals, Elijah, is present at the mountain and, unlike in Matthew and Luke, mentioned before Moses: καὶ ὥφθη αὐτοῖς Ἡλίας σὺν Μωϋσῇ.³⁰ This emphasis of the presence of Elijah seems, if not ruling out, so at least to be downplaying a Moses typology.³¹ Instead, I suggest, the evidence points in another direction, namely that Mark more than anything else presents Jesus as acting in *God's* role in the Exodus accounts.

7.3.2. Elijah and Moses

A key to the proper understanding of the transfiguration is the presence of both Elijah and Moses. What is actually their role in this passage? Mark does not say much, only that the OT heroes appeared after Jesus had been transfigured and that they were talking to Jesus. The traditional answer has been that they represent the Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets.³² But it does not fit well with Mark's emphasis on Elijah, nor is Elijah an obvious representative for the writing prophets. More recent interpretations suggest that both were assigned an eschatological task, but whereas Elijah clearly has one (Mal 4:5), evidence for such expectations regarding Moses is late.³³ Elijah did not taste death (cf. Mark 9:1), and according to some Jewish traditions Moses was also translated to heaven.³⁴ But if that is the point one may wonder why Enoch,³⁵ who was a more obvious candidate and about whom there

Hooker suggests that the wording in 6:15 may be an explicit rejection of speculation that Jesus is "the prophet" who was to come.

³⁰ On the basis of overall Markan usage, Heil, *Transfiguration*, 96-97, argues that the preposition σύν does not subordinate Moses to Elijah, but enhances him. In my view, Heil is correct that Mark's use of σύν is consistent, but his understanding of its significance is, in my view, incorrect. The point in 2:26 is not that David is superior, but that *even* those with him ate of the bread of presence. Likewise in 4:10 and 8:34 the matter is not which group is the superior one, but that Jesus spoke to a group other than the twelve, whose presence is taken for granted. The same goes for 15:27, where Mark points out that two other men were crucified together with Jesus. In the transfiguration narrative, Mark then *emphasizes* the presence of Elijah; Moses might have been expected, but Elijah was also there!

³¹ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:685-87; A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy* (JSNTSup 122; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 45-47, on the lack of emphasis on Mosaic themes in Mark.

³² Defended by e.g., Taylor, *Mark*, 390; Cranfield, *Mark*, 295.

³³ Baltensweiler, *Verklärung*, 72-75; Hooker, "Elijah," 62, n. 9; Zeller, "Verwandlung," 319; cf. Marcus, *Way*, 88-89. One should here distinguish between the expectation of a new Moses and the expected *return* of Moses himself (cf. Liefeld, "Transfiguration," 173).

³⁴ Marcus, *Way*, 87-90.

³⁵ For the pairing of Enoch and Elijah in the Jewish tradition, see J. Jeremias, "Ἡλ(ε)ίας," *TDNT* 2:938-39.

was plenty of speculation, is absent.³⁶ Both Elijah and Moses were associated with miracles, a feature Jesus clearly shares with them, but this does not fit the present context.

Instead, the most obvious link is that both of them encountered God on a high mountain, Moses on his two ascents of Mt. Sinai (Exod 24:15-18; 34: 4-8) and Elijah on Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8-18), the latter clearly echoing Exod 33-34.³⁷ Since the two mountains were equated in the Jewish tradition,³⁸ the reception of the theophanies no doubt were seen to have taken place on the same site, the theophanic location par excellence.³⁹ The allusions to Exod 24 and 34 which, by mentioning Elijah, also bring 1 Kgs 19 into the picture indicate that the unidentified, high mountain (Mark 9:2) should be understood as the new Sinai.⁴⁰ The objection by Zeller that Moses' and Elijah's experience of a theophany has nothing to do with Jesus, as he does not experience a vision of God misses the whole point.⁴¹ Jesus is not acting in a role similar to theirs or being compared to them.⁴² Mark, it should be observed, does not say anything about Elijah or Moses being transfigured or in a glorious state.⁴³ Only Jesus is. He is the central figure and the object for their and the three disciples' sight.⁴⁴ Likewise, Jesus does not speak with God as Moses and Elijah did. Nor do they speak with God as they formerly did. Instead they speak with Jesus. Given the generally acknowledged echoes of Exod 24 and 34 and the rare appearances of the verb συλλαλέω in the LXX,⁴⁵ I doubt that it is a mere coincidence that Mark uses

³⁶ The related suggestion by Öhler, "Verklärung," 206, that both of them are heavenly citizens faces a similar objection. Why Elijah and Moses and not Enoch, the Patriarchs, or angels? Cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 9:4-5, which mentions the Patriarchs, Enoch, Elijah, and David, but with Moses being strangely absent.

³⁷ So e.g., D. Baly, "The Transfiguration Story," *ExpTim* 82 (1970): 83; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:697; Gundry, *Mark*, 459; Evans, *Mark*, 36; Marcus, *Mark*, 632.

³⁸ See Lee, *Transfiguration*, 18-19.

³⁹ M. Trimaille, "Le récit de la Transfiguration comme récit interprétatif Marc 9, 1-13," in *Le temps de la lecture: Exégèse biblique et sémiotique* (ed. L. Panier; LD 155; Paris: Cerf, 1993), 163-72, 167.

⁴⁰ Hooker, *Mark*, 216; Trimaille, "Transfiguration," 167. Note that Mark does not identify the location. Cf. also R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 139: "The scene echoes the greatest OT theophany, for it takes place on a mountain amidst the presence of Moses and Elijah who encountered God on Sinai (Horeb)." Note also that Mark probably already has alluded to God's "passing by" of Moses and Elijah in these stories in the sea-walking account. See 6.3.

⁴¹ Zeller, "Verwandlung," 319.

⁴² Contra Lührman, *Markus*, 156, who states that Jesus is on a par with Elijah and Moses.

⁴³ Against the tendency to read Luke's version (9:31) into Mark's.

⁴⁴ Lane, *Mark*, 317.

the verb here, and only here. His point is precisely that Moses and Elijah now speak to Jesus as they spoke to God in the past. For Mark, then, Jesus is acting in the place of God in this “new Sinai” theophany. What once took place on Sinai and Horeb is now repeated, but with some significant variations.⁴⁶

7.3.3. Two Divine Manifestations

Scholars variously use the terms “theophany,” “epiphany,” and “vision” to characterize the transfiguration, often without making much distinction between them. Strictly speaking, however, if the “epiphany,” in difference from the “theophany,” is defined as the *visible* manifestation of a divine or heavenly being *on earth*, the transfiguration narrative should be seen as an “epiphany.”⁴⁷ My only quarrel with this definition is that it may involve any heavenly being, whereas the term “theophany” suggests that it is restricted to the manifestation of a deity.⁴⁸ Heil can therefore speak of three epiphanic actions, the transfiguration of Jesus, the appearance of Elijah with Moses, and the overshadowing of the divine cloud.⁴⁹ It may be, but the second one seems to be subordinated to the first and also a part of it, serving to highlight the divine identity of the transfigured one, if my above interpretation of Elijah’s and Moses’ function is correct. It is therefore better to speak of two divine manifestations, one of Jesus (9:2-3) and one of God (9:7).⁵⁰

⁴⁵ In addition to Exod 34:35, only in Isa 7:6; Jer 18:20.

⁴⁶ So also A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 251. These events are also connected in e.g., *Acts John* 90; Irenaeus (*Haer.* 4.20.9); Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat.* 12.16).

⁴⁷ According to common definition, in a “theophany” the coming of a divine being is seen by its effect on the creation, but the deity remains invisible, whereas a “vision” is an experience of heavenly realities usually taking place in heaven. See Heil, *Transfiguration*, 35-44, and the literature he cites. Heil only cites examples from the biblical literature and is not discussing Greco-Roman evidence.

⁴⁸ Cf. 6.1 notes 3-5.

⁴⁹ Heil, *Transfiguration*, 43-44.

⁵⁰ So also, Lee, *Transfiguration*, 14, who states the first is visible and the second audible, but the appearance of the cloud makes the latter visible too. In his search for the origin of the passage, H.-P. Müller, “Die Verklärung Jesu,” *ZNW* 51 (1960): 56-64, argued that two originally independent stories have been fused, each varying “das alte Thema vom Erscheinen der Gottheit im Lichtglanz” (62): 1) the appearance of a cloud with God’s declaration that Jesus is the Messiah to the chosen disciples (9:2a, b, 7, 9); 2) an epiphany of the deity in which Jesus is acting in the divine role (9:2c-6, 8). Leaving aside the question of the origin of the passage, Müller’s observation that the passage consists of two divine manifestation seems correct.

We begin with that of Jesus. Jesus appears in a transfigured state before his disciples, his clothes being supernaturally bright and white.⁵¹ To be sure, this description may not necessarily imply that Jesus is a divine person. Shining or white garments could, as Bauckham points out, be used to depict any heavenly being.⁵² But Jesus is, as we already have noted, in another category than his heavenly conversation partners in the present passage⁵³ and we have evidence from other Markan passages that Jesus is placed above the angels in the *heavenly* hierarchy (13:32).⁵⁴ Furthermore, nothing suggests that Jesus is simply given white, glorious clothes, as the righteous ones in the apocalyptic literature.⁵⁵ The change of the clothes' appearance follows upon Jesus' own change and is a result of this.⁵⁶ Also, unlike the oftentimes cited parallel in Exod 34:29-35, Jesus' glorious appearance is neither limited to the face nor the result of an encounter with God. Jesus is transfigured before God appears on the scene.⁵⁷ Thus France correctly notes that Jesus' glory is "intrinsic to himself."⁵⁸ Again, this may not necessarily imply that Jesus is acting in the role of YHWH himself. What finally suggests this, however, is the immediately preceding passage, where Jesus claims that he one day will return in

⁵¹ Jewish readers were, of course, familiar with the idea that God and angels could appear in human form from the Bible (e.g., Gen 18; Exod 3:2-6; Josh 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-24; 13:2-24; Ezekiel 1. Furthermore, the Book of Tobit describes how the angel Raphael for a while appears on earth in human form and only reveals his true identity shortly before he leaves (Tob 12:11-22). On this, see further C. A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU, 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 135-36.

⁵² Bauckham, *Jesus*, 160-61. Cf. e.g., Ps 104:1-2; Dan 7:9; 2 Macc 11:8; 1 En. 14:20; 62:15; 71:1, 10; 2 En. 22:8-9; 3 En. 12:1-2; 4 Ezra 2:39; *Ascen. Isa.* 8:21-6; *T. Job* 46:7-9; *L.A.B.* 64:6; Matt 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10; Rev 3:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14.

⁵³ Contra Heil, *Transfiguration*, 123: "Each of the heavenly figures in the transfiguration epiphany, however, is analogous to God inasmuch as each appears in divine heavenly glory."

⁵⁴ For this terminology, see Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 50.

⁵⁵ E.g., 1 En. 62:15; 2 En. 22:8-9; 4 Ezra 2:39; Rev 7:9, 13-14.

⁵⁶ France, *Mark*, 350; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 49.

⁵⁷ Rightly Collins, *Mark*, 417. This is true also of Philo and Ps-Philo, who, however, transfer the transformation to Moses' first encounter with God. See Zeller, "Verwandlung," 312.

⁵⁸ France, *Mark*, 351. In recent scholarship one has often insisted that the transfiguration narrative does not disclose the present status of Jesus, but that it must be seen as an anticipation of his post-resurrection or future parousia glory (see n. 6 above). This can hardly be correct, however, since Jesus' glorious appearance is so closely tied to God's identification of Jesus as his son: he is already now God's son and has been since at least his baptism (1:9-11). Just as much as his divine sonship is a present reality, so is his glory permanent, though hidden; Jesus reveals who he already is and what he already has. See e.g., T. A. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation: An Examination of the Philosophy of St. Mark's Gospel* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 159-60; S. Aalen, "Glory," *NIDNTT* 2:48; Öhler, "Verklärung," 216; Zeller, "Verwandlung," 310; Schenke, "Gibt es," 59-63; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 49-50; Marcus, *Mark*, 1117; Lee, *Transfiguration*, 23.

“the glory of his Father” (8:38).⁵⁹ Although Mark does not use the term “glory,” it is probable that the metamorphosis of Jesus should be seen as the manifestation of the divine glory which he shares with the Father.⁶⁰ This is the more likely as the other part of the claim in 8:38, namely that God is his father, is sanctioned by God later in this passage (9:7). The transfiguration narrative thus confirms both Jesus’ claim that God is his father *and* that they share the divine glory. In this light it is also likely that the reference to the dazzlingly white clothes actually alludes specifically to the description of the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:9,⁶¹ not unlike Rev 1:14. The transfigured Jesus is in other words depicted like God⁶² and consequently revealed as divine.⁶³

The second divine manifestation, in the form of a cloud and a heavenly voice, occurs in response to Peter’s confused and misdirected suggestion to erect three tents (9:7). In the OT, YHWH or the glory of YHWH often appears in a cloud.⁶⁴ In this context the primary reference must be the appearances of a cloud on Mt. Sinai, from which God also speaks.⁶⁵ God is, in other words, manifested in a manner similar to that of the Exodus accounts. The difference in this regard (apart from the content of the oral revelation) is that the glory of God is *not* manifested in the cloud (cf. Exod

⁵⁹ See 8.3 below on 8:38. A further link between 8:38 and the transfiguration narrative may be found in the fact that the expectation of a future coming of God was grounded in his past coming at Sinai. See T. F. Glasson, “Theophany and Parousia,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 259: “These divine comings of the future reflect the theophany at Sinai, and the conviction grew that as the Lord had come down at the beginning of Israel’s history, so he would come down at the end.”

⁶⁰ McNeile, *Matthew*, 251; Hooker, “Elijah,” 60; Hurtado, *Mark*, 145; Lee, *Transfiguration*, 44-45.

⁶¹ Hurtado, *Mark*, 145. This is also the understanding of some scribes who add the words ὥς χιῶν (e.g., A, D, *f*¹³, the Majority text, etc.). The framing of the transfiguration narrative by references to the Son of Man (8:38; 9:9, 12) may be further evidence for a link to Dan 7. Note also the description of the Great Glory in *1 En.* 14:20-21 and 71:10, both alluding to Dan 7:9. On the former, see Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 367.

⁶² Cf. also Deut 33:2; Ps 104:1-2; Hab 3:3-4; *1 En.* 14:20.

⁶³ Gundry, *Mark*, 459. In his search for parallels in the biblical literature, Heil highlights Judges 6:11-24; 13:2-24, where the Angel of YHWH appears to human beings (*Transfiguration*, 43-48) and he also draws attention to the close parallels in Num 22:31-35; Josh 5:13-15; and 2 Macc 3:22-34.

⁶⁴ Exod 13:21-22; 19:9; 33:9; 40:34-38; Num 9:18-23; 10:36 (LXX); 17:7-10; Deut 31:15; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; Job 38:1; Ezek 1:4, 28; 2:1. Cf. *Jub.* 1:2-3; *T. Job* 42:1-3. See further Lohmeyer, “Verklärung,” 196-98; A. Oepke, “νεφέλη, κτλ,” *TDNT* 4:902-10; Öhler, “Verklärung,” 209-10.

⁶⁵ Exod 19:16-19; 24:15-25; 34:5. In the OT the linking of the cloud and the voice is limited to Exodus. Outside the canon, see however 11Q10 40:6.

24:16-17; 40:34-35⁶⁶), but already present before the cloud appears, manifested in Jesus!⁶⁷

The divine manifestations of the transfiguration narrative, thus, in significant ways repeat the Sinai theophanies of the OT. But – and this is the fundamental difference – what is said of the God of Israel alone in the Exodus accounts is split between Jesus and God in the present narrative: God appears in the cloud and speaks from the cloud (Exod 24:16-17); at the same time Jesus manifests the glory of YHWH, and Moses and Elijah see and speak to him (Exod 33-34; 1 Kgs 19:8-18).⁶⁸ What we find here, I suggest, is close to what is taking place in 1 Cor 8:6, where Paul splits the *Shema* between God the Father and Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ The expectation of some Jews of the return of the cloud and the divine glory of the Exodus⁷⁰ is thus fulfilled in a surprising way!

7.3.4. The Experience of the Disciples

Apart from comments on Peter's proposal to construct three tents, discussions of this passage tend to have rather little to say on the disciples. But they play no doubt a significant role in the narrative. It is, in fact, their experience, predicted in 9:1,⁷¹ which is narrated, and the climax of the story is reached when God commissions *them* to obey his son.⁷²

In his search for the origin of this passage, Müller draws attention to a number of passages in the OT and early Jewish literature where the awesome and

⁶⁶ The same verb (ἐπισκιάζω) is used for the overshadowing in Mark as in LXX Exod 40:35.

⁶⁷ Contra Liefeld, "Transfiguration," 170, who contrary to all evidence claims that the disciples "saw the Shekinah glory in the cloud."

⁶⁸ Lee, *Transfiguration*, 24, notes that Jesus acts in some of the roles of God in the Exodus accounts, but then denies that God's glory is revealed, in spite of later connecting Jesus' glorious appearance with the Father's glory (44-45). However, he then, correctly, notes that Jesus in the transfiguration becomes the visible content of a theophany and the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

⁶⁹ On 1 Cor 8:6, see e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 180; E. Waaler, *The Shema and the First Commandment in First Corinthians: An Intertextual Approach to Paul's Rereading of Deuteronomy* (WUNT 2:253; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2008).

⁷⁰ Isa 4:5; 2 Macc 2:8. Cf. Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 177.

⁷¹ See e.g., Gnllka, *Markus*, 2:27; Hooker, *Mark*, 214-15; Lee, *Transfiguration*, 15.

⁷² In this way, I agree with Heil (*Transfiguration*, 51-73) that the passage can be defined as a "pivotal mandatory epiphany," but he puts too much emphasis on the command, while underestimating both the significance of Jesus' metamorphosis and God's revelation of Jesus as his beloved son. Similar critique is voiced by Lee, *Transfiguration*, 38.

fearful experience of a divine manifestation, often a vision of the Glory of YHWH, is followed by a commissioning of the human recipient.⁷³ Prime here are, of course, the experiences of Moses and Elijah of God on Sinai/Horeb which in both cases are followed by a commissioning.⁷⁴ But this pattern is also found in some of the most famous call narratives of the Scripture, those of Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel,⁷⁵ and later we find it in the apocalyptic literature as well as in the NT.⁷⁶

Like Moses and Elijah, the three chosen disciples experience the divine manifestation(s) on a mountain. Jesus is transformed into a glorious being and they react with strong fear. Mark explains Peter's confused offer to build three tents⁷⁷ as being due to the extreme fear they are experiencing (9:6: ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο). This is, as already noted, a typical reaction to theophanies and angelophanies,⁷⁸ but it also reminds Mark's audience of the disciples' previous fearful reactions to Jesus (4:41; 6:50). Only after this fearful experience the second divine manifestation follows, the appearance of the divine cloud and God's revelation of Jesus' identity and commissioning of the disciples. In contrast to similar commissioning stories, however, God does not give any specific task except listening to Jesus, that is, God refers to the subject of the first divine manifestation, confirming what he has already said as well as legitimizing further teaching.⁷⁹ This also means that Jesus' call of the disciples now is confirmed by God himself.⁸⁰ The disciples, in other words, have an experience which is similar, yet different, to those of the great prophets of the Scripture, and Paul⁸¹ and John of Patmos in the NT. Unlike those of old, who (only)

⁷³ Müller, "Verklärung," 58-59. He was searching for the background of verses 2a, b, 7, 9, which he had isolated from the rest of the passage. But the reaction of fear, which is found outside this unit, is a common theme in the passages Müller identified.

⁷⁴ Exod 25; 34:10-28; 1 Kgs 19:15-18.

⁷⁵ Exod 3; Isa 6:1-11; Ezek 1:1-3:11

⁷⁶ *I En.* 14:8-16:4; Acts 9:3-8 with parallels; Rev 1:10-19.

⁷⁷ In Mark's view, Peter's proposal was clearly incorrect, probably because it suggested that Jesus was on the same level as Moses and Elijah, and probably also because it would prevent Jesus to go through his necessary suffering and death (cf. 8:32-33).

⁷⁸ See 6.5 n. 72.

⁷⁹ On God's role as endorsing Jesus in Mark, see J. D. Kingsbury, "'God' within the Narrative World of Mark," in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology* (ed. A. A. Das and F. J. Matera; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 75-89.

⁸⁰ Lohmeyer rightly comments, "das Wort klingt wie eine feierliche Einweihung in das Schülertum der Drei" (*Markus*, 177).

⁸¹ For the parallels between the transfiguration story and Paul's experience of the glorified Christ according to Acts, see Moses, *Transfiguration*, 233-34; for an early Christian linking of Paul's Damascus experience with that of Peter, see *Acts Pet.* 20.

experienced the God of Israel, and the latter ones, who (only) experience the glorified Jesus, the three disciples experience both.⁸²

7.3.5. God's Command to Hear His Son

This brings us to the final point, the meaning of God's identification of Jesus as his beloved son, and the command "listen to him" (9:7). We begin with the latter. Most scholars view these words as a direct allusion to, or even a citation of Deut 18:15, where Moses exhorts the Israelites to hear the prophet whom God was going to raise in his place.⁸³ There are, however, reasons to question, or at least qualify this interpretation, and other passages may actually be in view.⁸⁴ First, as already noted, the overall context of Mark does not favour an identification of Jesus with the eschatological prophet, nor is Jesus called prophet here, but beloved son.⁸⁵ Since Moses, in fact, is present, it would certainly have made the case stronger if he, and not God, had identified Jesus as the prophet he promised.

Second, the word order, tense, and mood of Mark (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) differ from both the LXX and Hebrew of Deut 18:15 (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε/אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּשְׁמָעוּ).⁸⁶ These differences may perhaps be explained by the fact that Moses spoke of the future, whereas God addresses a current situation. Nevertheless, the divine command is closer to and agrees both in word order and mood with Jesus' own exhortation in

⁸² Many scholars regard the disciples' question about why the Scribes say that Elijah must come first (9:11) as a reference to a Jewish expectation that Elijah would precede the Messiah (see Marcus, *Way*, 110; idem, *Mark*, 644). But what is at issue is rather the resurrection, triggered by Jesus' claim that the Son of Man will be raised despite that Elijah, who was expected to come before the day of YHWH and the general resurrection, had not come. See Gundry, *Mark*, 484; France, *Mark*, 357; Collins, *Mark*, 429-30. In other words, the question does not suggest that the disciples had interpreted their mountain experience as a revelation of Jesus' Messiahship. On this question, see 2.2, n. 27.

⁸³ E. g., Müller, "Verklärung," 60; Lane, *Mark*, 321; Gnlika, *Markus*, 2:36; Hurtado, *Mark*, 145; Heil, *Transfiguration*, 166; Marcus, *Mark*, 634.

⁸⁴ An allusion to Deut 18:15 has been called into question by e.g., H.-J. Steichele, *Der leidende Sohn Gottes: Eine Untersuchung einiger alttestamentlicher Motive in der Christologie des Markusevangeliums* (Biblische Untersuchungen 14; Regensburg: Pustet, 1980), 173, 178; Gundry, *Mark*, 461; Öhler, "Verklärung," 214; G. H. Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament Christology" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001), 381-82.

⁸⁵ The latter point is, of course, generally recognized, and most scholars argue that Jesus' identity goes beyond that of the eschatological prophet. Hooker assumes there is an echo, but argues that the category "prophet" is inappropriate. "[W]hat we have in the Transfiguration story is far more than one prophet commanding obedience to his successor" ("Elijah," 66).

⁸⁶ Note that Luke and perhaps also Matthew have the reverse word order. On the complicated manuscript situation in Matthew, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 702. Note also the exact citation of LXX Deut 18:15 in Acts 3:22.

Mark 7:14: ἀκούσατέ μου.⁸⁷ God's command may, in other words, be echoing Jesus' own claim, serving as its divine confirmation.⁸⁸ It is also possible that another OT passage is in view.⁸⁹ In Exod 23:21, the phrase εἰσάκουε αὐτοῦ is used by YHWH when he exhorts his people to listen to the angel who will go before them. Over against Deut 18:15, this passage has the advantage of agreeing with Mark's word order, tense, and mood, appearing in the context of Exod 24, which is regarded as the primary background of the transfiguration narrative, and, not the least, God is the speaker. Thus, unlike Deut 18:15, where Moses speaks of a future prophet like him, God in Exod 23:21 exhorts his people to there and then obey his angel.⁹⁰ Furthermore, just as the intratextual echo in Mark indicates a close association between Jesus' and God's word, so the words of the angel seems to be identified with God's.⁹¹

Third, the context of Deut 18:15 makes clear that this future prophet was to speak only what God had commanded, in his name (18:18-20), just as Moses himself did.⁹² But Jesus goes far beyond that in Mark. Apart from a few references to the Scripture (e.g., 10:6-8; 11:17; 14:27), he nowhere refers to what God has commanded or passes on what God has told him, using a phrase like "thus says the Lord" or acting "in the name of YHWH." Instead, Jesus refers to his own word or his gospel (4:1-20; 8:35, 38; 10:29) and introduces his sayings with the authoritative ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν.⁹³ We should also notice that other human beings do things in Jesus' name in Mark, rather than in God's (9:37-39), and that Jesus, like YHWH, warns of those who speak falsely in his name (13:6; Deut 18:20).

Moreover, in his discussion with the Pharisees in Mark 7:1-23 he criticizes them for leaving and rejecting the commandments of God and making void the word

⁸⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 461; Heil, *Transfiguration*, 166. Cf. also Mark 4:3, 9, 23-24.

⁸⁸ God's exhortation to hear Jesus is particularly striking in the light of the fact that YHWH, in the only OT passage which juxtaposes the names Elijah and Moses (Mal 4:4-5), exhorts his people to "remember the law of my servant Moses."

⁸⁹ So also Juncker, "Angel," 381-82; noted in passing by Lee, *Transfiguration*, 29.

⁹⁰ This angel is as already noted probably the Angel of YHWH, who is intimately associated with YHWH himself. See 3.3.7.

⁹¹ LXX Exod 23:22 states that by paying attention to the angel they listen to God's voice (ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς). The MT has the angel's voice here. But the next clause indicates a close identification in the Hebrew text, too.

⁹² E.g., Exod 16:16; 19:7; Deut 1:3; 6:1.

⁹³ 9:41; 10:15; 10:29; 11:23; 13:30.

of God by their own tradition (7:8, 9, 13).⁹⁴ But then Jesus himself, after having invited all to listen to *him* (7:14), and contrary to the clear teaching of the Torah (e.g., Lev 11), goes on to pronounce all foods clean (7:15, 19).⁹⁵ He does not only challenge the Scribes' interpretation of the Torah, but the Torah itself, thereby making himself open to the charge he places on the Pharisees by citing Isa 29:13 (7:6-7) and accusing them for rejecting the commandments of God. Given the view that the Torah is eternal⁹⁶ and the importance Jews attached to maintaining the food laws,⁹⁷ not the least during Antiochus' persecution when the faithful members of the people rather died than eating anything unclean,⁹⁸ this is indeed a remarkable claim. For, who can revoke the commandments of the Torah but its author?⁹⁹ From Mark's point of view, human tradition (cf. 7:8) cannot change the Law. Only Jesus has an authority which qualifies him for this.¹⁰⁰ This authority, then, seems to place Jesus on the divine side of the God/humanity divide and his own word on a par with God's.¹⁰¹

The same kind of claim is also made in 13:31 where Jesus states that "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." It may well be that the saying alludes to Isa 51:6, "for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment"¹⁰² and Isa 40:8, "the word of our God will stand forever."¹⁰³ The implication is in any case clear: Jesus' words are given the same status as God's words.¹⁰⁴ What is said of God and his words in the OT can, for Mark, be said of

⁹⁴ See esp. J. Marcus, "Scripture and Tradition in Mark 7," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997): 177-195. On the issue of purity in general in Mark, see J. H. Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel," *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91-128.

⁹⁵ For that Mark understands Jesus' saying in 7:15 as a performative pronouncement, see Marcus, "Tradition," 183, n. 25.

⁹⁶ Ps 119:89, 160; Isa 40:8; Bar 4:1; Wis 18:4; *L.A.B.* 11:5; 4 *Ezra* 9:36-37.

⁹⁷ Dan 1:5-16; Tob 1:10-12; Jdt 12:11-12; 12:1-2; Esth 14:17.

⁹⁸ 1 Macc 1:62-63; 2 Macc 6:18-31; 7.

⁹⁹ Note that Peter's objection to eating unclean food in Acts 10:10-16 is countered by the argument that *God* has declared it clean (10:15).

¹⁰⁰ One point made in 9:7 is thus that it confirms Jesus' change of the Torah.

¹⁰¹ Cf. e.g., Schulz, *Stunde*, 83; Gundry, *Mark*, 356; Stein, *Mark*, 347.

¹⁰² For the passing away of the present created order, see also Gen 8:22; Ps 102: 25-27; Isa 34:4; 65:17; *T. Job* 33:4; 4 *Ezra* 7:30-31; 2 *En.* 70:9.

¹⁰³ The likelihood of an allusion to Isa 40:8 is strengthened by Mark's citation Isa 40:3 in the opening lines of the Gospel. Note also that the textual variant in MS W includes 40:8 in its version of the citation. On the influence of the context of Isa 40:3 on the present passage and the early Christian writings in general, see C. J. Davis, *The Name and the Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 129; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 175-177.

¹⁰⁴ See note 96 above. Scholars who takes this view include Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 282; Taylor, *Mark*, 521; Cranfield, *Mark*, 409-410; Lane, *Mark*, 480; Hooker, *Mark*, 321; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*,

Jesus and his words.¹⁰⁵ In the present context the words probably primarily serve to underline the truth of Jesus' teaching in chapter 13, but since this is the last teaching section in the Gospel they in all likelihood also refer to everything Jesus has been teaching in Mark.

Given this evidence, it is probably better to understand God's command in 9:7 in the light of the repeated commands in the OT to hear and obey God himself, than the command to hear the prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15.¹⁰⁶ As Watts points out, "his [God's] words are now identified with the words of Jesus."¹⁰⁷

Finally, we consider the first part of the heavenly declaration, "This is my beloved son." It is generally agreed that they echo passages such as Gen 22:2 and Ps 2:7, in which case they both imply suffering and have a royal connotation.¹⁰⁸ But in their present context they clearly also take on new, unprecedented meaning. Jesus has been shown to share in the very glory of God, to act in God's role in the Exodus accounts, and his words are given the same status as God's words. Yet, it is clear that

3: 368; Evans, *Mark*, 337; Moloney, *Mark*, 269; France, *Mark*, 540; Edwards, *Mark*, 405. The claim made here goes beyond what is said of the Law in Matt 5:18 (Taylor, *Mark*, 521; Hooker, *Mark*, 321), since Jesus' words will not go away even when heaven and earth do, and is only paralleled in John (cf. 6:63, 68; 14:10; 15:7; 17:8; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 282; Taylor, *Mark*, 521; Nineham, *Mark*, 360). On Jesus' unique position viz-a-viz the law in general and its implication, see M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 69-70.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. also M. E. Boring, "Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus?" *NTS* 45 (1999): 451-71: "Jesus speaks in the first person of his own word (not God's) as eternal, i.e. speaks in a way that surpasses the prophetic claim and tends in the direction of identifying himself with God" (469). Moses, *Transfiguration*, 64-66 (cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [2d ed.; London: SCM, 2006], 231), compares Jesus' authoritative teaching to the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness, who was thought to have a God-given insight into the meaning of the prophets' teaching and whom the community was expected to obey (CD 1:12-13; 6:7-11; 1QpHab 2:7-8; 1QpHab 6:14-7:5; see G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [3rd ed.; London: Penguin, 1990], 40). The kind of authority Mark ascribes to Jesus' teaching, however, seems to surpass anything that is said about the Teacher of Righteousness, not the least the attribution of a change of the Torah in Mark 7 and the claim that Jesus' words shall outlast heaven and earth.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 218. See e.g., Exod 15:26; Lev 26:14-27; Jos 3:9; 1 Sam 15:1; Ps 81:11-13; Isa 46:3, 12; 48:12; 49:1; 51:1, 7; 55:2; Jer 34:14; 35:15; Ezek 3:7; 20:39. Note also that God spoke to Moses on Sinai of forgiving sins, doing wonders, and making a covenant (Exod 34:6-7, 10). In Mark, Jesus has forgiven sins and done wonders, and he will soon make a covenant (14:24).

¹⁰⁷ R. E. Watts, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 188; similarly Marcus, *Way*, 92. Cf. also H. Gese, "Das Gesetz," in idem, *Zur biblischen Theologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (München: Kaiser, 1977), 55-84, 81: "Jesus ist zum göttlichen Offenbarungswort selbst geworden." In my view G. Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* (BZNW 123; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 162, does not spell out the full significance of Jesus' role as "new law-giver" when she states that "Jesus übernimmt ... die Rolle des Moses und überbietet sie."

¹⁰⁸ See Liefeld, "Transfiguration," 175-6; Stegner, "Use," 116. The same designation, "beloved son," is also found in Mark 12:1-12.

the Markan Jesus has not been merged with God. While being closely associated with God, Jesus is also distinct from him. What was said of God in the OT accounts has, as we noted before, been split between God and Jesus in the transfiguration account.

How are we, then, to understand the relationship between Jesus and God? We have already noted a somewhat similar relationship between YHWH and his angel in the biblical literature, which shows that what is going on here is not completely unprecedented.¹⁰⁹ But Mark does not choose this OT terminology to describe the relationship between Jesus and God. Instead, he explains it as a father-son relationship. This use of language from familial relationships to describe how God relates to human beings is rooted in the OT, and both the king (Ps 2:7) and the people (Exod 4:22) can be designated “sons” of Israel’s God. While using this, Mark, however, also goes beyond OT usage, for, in his view, Jesus is not only fully human, but also placed on the divine side of that divide which sets Israel’s God apart from everything else, and participating in his father’s divine reality.¹¹⁰

7.4. Conclusion

Mark’s account of the transfiguration portrays Jesus as a divine figure. Those familiar with Greco-Roman traditions would no doubt understand the metamorphosis of Jesus as a revelation of his true and divine identity. But a similar conclusion must also be drawn when the story is read against OT/Jewish background. Jesus is revealed as sharing the glory of his father already during his earthly life and acting in roles which belonged to God in those OT accounts which constitute the most significant background of the story. Indeed, those features which were associated with YHWH alone in the OT stories which are alluded to, are now split between Jesus and God. To the three disciples who are witnessing this, Jesus is revealed as a divine being who relates to Israel’s God as a son to a father. Furthermore, like some of the prophets of old they receive a call, to hear God’s son, in connection with their theophanic experience. Thus, while not excluding that there are other aspects of Mark’s rich portrait of Jesus at play in a passage with such polyvalent character as

¹⁰⁹ Juncker, “Angel,” 382, argues that Jesus is presented as the Angel of the Lord here.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 275-76; Lee, *Transfiguration*, 34-35.

this,¹¹¹ there is clearly also strong evidence for a divine Jesus and a very close linking of him to Israel's God.

¹¹¹ Scholars all too often promote one aspect of Mark's christology at the cost of another. In my view, it is not so much "either ... or" as "both ... and". Paul's declaration that "all the promises of God find their yes in him" (2 Cor 1:20) seems applicable to Markan christology.

8. Jesus and God in Markan Eschatology

8.1. Introduction

In early Christianity the concept of “the day of the Lord,” which in the OT refers to the intervention of YHWH to save or judge¹, came to refer to the parousia of *Jesus*. Thus Paul, in what is probably the earliest writing of the NT, can refer to Jesus’ return as “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; cf. 2 Thess 2:2). Apparently, the day of the Lord *God* has become the day of the Lord *Jesus*.² Along the same lines, the biblical “coming of God” tradition, which should be distinguished from the day of YHWH tradition and which uses verbs such as “come,” “come down,” and “go forth” to speak about God’s personal intervention or manifestation, was used to describe the expected future *coming of Jesus* (cf. 1 Thess 3:13; 4:16-17).³ These early expectations of Jesus taking on roles which were envisaged for the God of Israel in the eschatological drama of the last days no doubt imply a very close association of Jesus with God, or as Kreitzer put it, “a conceptual overlap between God and Christ.”⁴

Jesus’ role in Mark’s eschatology is very similar to that of Paul.⁵ Even though the exact expression “the day of the Lord” does not appear in Mark, day of the Lord language is used to describe Jesus’ future coming and Jesus is presented as acting in a number of *eschatological* roles which the biblical literature and early Jewish texts normally reserve for God. Commentaries frequently observe this phenomenon. Its significance for Jesus’ status is, however, seldom given due weight.⁶ But, as we shall

¹ See e.g., R. H. Hiers, “Day of the Lord,” in *ABD*, 2:82-83.

² So explicitly in 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; cf. Phil 1:10; 2:16. See further Acts 2:20; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 16:14.

³ See T. F. Glasson, “Theophany and Parousia,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 259-70; E. Adams, “The ‘Coming of God’ Tradition and its Influence on New Testament Parousia Texts” in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (ed. C. Hempel and J. M. Lieu; JSJSup 111; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1-19.

⁴ L. J. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul’s Eschatology* (JSNTSup 19; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), esp. 25, 112-29, 161-63. Kreitzer’s study focuses particularly on day of YHWH texts; see also L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 181.

⁵ On the parallels between Mark 13 and the Epistles to the Thessalonians, see L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1966), 178-205.

⁶ One exception is Hurtado, who notes that Jesus appears “acting in the role of God” (*Mark*, 221).

see, Mark's eschatological teaching offers further important evidence for Jesus' close identification with the God of Israel.

Passages which deal with the future coming of Jesus are comparatively few in number (8:38; 13:24-27; 14:62; implicitly in 12:9; 13:35), but they are strategically placed. The first appears between Peter's confession and the first passion prediction on the one side and the transfiguration on the other. The second constitutes the climax of Jesus' eschatological speech, and the third is a part of Jesus' confession before the high priest. We begin with the most comprehensive account, in Mark 13.

8.2. Mark 13:24-27

Mark 13:24-27 depicts the return of Jesus and the events surrounding it in the following way:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, [25] and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. [26] And then they will see the Son of Man⁷ coming in clouds with great power and glory. [27] And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Verses 24-25 combine elements from Joel 2:10; 4:15; Isa 13:10; 34:4, all of which are descriptions of the day of YHWH.⁸ Thus Joel 2:10 states that on the day of YHWH "the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining", and Isa 13:9-10 states: "Behold, the day of YHWH comes [...] For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light." This use of day of YHWH language gives a strong indication that the return of the Son of Man is identified with the Old Testament day of YHWH.⁹ But it is not limited to this. The final verb in 13:25,

⁷ There is no doubt that Jesus is the Son of Man in Mark. This is clear from the first time the title is used in 2:10.

⁸ For the use of OT, see Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 156-57; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 423-24; J. Verheyden, "Describing the Parousia: The Cosmic Phenomena in Mark 13,24-25," in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (BETL 131; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997): 525-50, 534-46. Other passages which associate God's intervention or coming with darkness or the darkening of the heavenly bodies include, Amos 5:20; Isa 24:21, 23; Ezek 32:7-8; Zeph 1:15; *1 En.* 102:2; *4 Ezra* 7:39; *L.A.B.* 19:13; *Sib. Or.* 2:194-202; 3:796-803; 5:344-49; *T. Levi* 4:1; *T. Mos.* 10:5; Rev 6:12-14.

⁹ Apart from the citations of OT day of YHWH texts in this passage, there may be some hints of the concept in the immediate context and elsewhere in Mark. Jesus refers to his coming as "that day" in 13:32, most likely an allusion to the OT concept (Taylor, *Mark*, 522; R. H. Hiers, "Day of Christ," in *ABD*, 2:77; T. J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* [JSNTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 246; cf. 1 Thess 5:4; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:3). With regard to the title

σαλεύω,¹⁰ evokes the coming or intervention of God in a more general way. σαλεύω is, as Beasley-Murray notes, “a standard term in Old Testament descriptions of theophany.”¹¹ The earthquake motif in particular is associated with theophanies¹² and God’s coming in both the OT and early Jewish writings.¹³ Here, however, it is *not* the earth and its inhabitants (cf. 13:8), but the less common motif of shaking the heavens that is in view.¹⁴ There is some disagreement as to whether “the powers in the heavens” refer to the heavenly bodies, or to the angels which were believed to rule over the stars (*1 En.* 72; 75; 82:10-20), or even evil cosmic spirits (cf. Eph 6:12).¹⁵ The common use of the verb σαλεύω for earthquakes in the LXX and the

“Lord” it is noteworthy that despite Mark’s rather sparse use of it, three of them occur in passages which are associated with Jesus’ return. In two parables the title refers to the coming back of the *Lord* (12:9; 13:35) and in 13:20 it is associated with the eschatological intervention by God and/or Jesus (see D. Johansson, “Kyrios in the Gospel of Mark,” *JSNT* 33 [2010]: 101-124). Verheyden (“Describing the Parousia,” 542, 549) argues that the lack of an explicit reference to ἡμέρα κυρίου in 13:24-25 shows that Mark did not think in terms of the day of YHWH, but this seems doubtful to me. Against those who infer that the citations evoke judgment on the basis of the original context of the texts, Verheyden states it is merely a matter of a theophany. In my view, however, he fails to give due weight, not only to that OT day of YHWH texts are cited, but also to the fact that the purpose of Jesus’ coming is the gathering of the elect (13:27), which is a day of YHWH feature (Isa 11:11-12; 27:12-13; Obad 15-21).

¹⁰ Isa 13:13; Joel 2:10; 4:16 include the motif of shaking but the LXX uses other verbs.

¹¹ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 424; Verheyden, “Describing the Parousia,” 544-46. The verb appears in the following LXX passages with reference to the coming or intervention by God: Judg 5:5; Pss 17:8; 76:19; 95:9; 96:4; 97:7; 113:7; Job 9:6; Amos 9:5; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5; Hab 3:6; Zech 14:6; Jdt 16:15; Sir 16:18; 43:16; cf. also *T. Levi* 3:9. Of these texts, only Sir 16:18 and *T. Levi* 3:9 refer to the shaking of heaven.

¹² According to the definition of J. Jeremias, a theophany includes two elements: a description of God’s coming and the upheaval in nature (*Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* [WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965], 1, 15).

¹³ Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 71-77.

¹⁴ 2 Sam 22:8; Isa 13:13; Joel 2:10; 4:16; Hag 2:6, 21; Sir 16:18; *1 En.* 60:1; *T. Levi* 3:9; Heb 12:26. Only Sir 16:18 and *T. Levi* 3:9 employ the verb σαλεύω. The shaking motif is probably also implicit in Isa 34:4 (“heaven shall roll up like a scroll” [LXX]). Pesch (*Markus*, 303) suggests that the shaking of the powers in the heavens refers to the dissolvent of the heavenly host in the Hebrew text of Isa 34:4a (וַיִּמְקַן כָּל צֶבֶא הַשָּׁמַיִם) which is missing in the LXX. An influence by the Hebrew text may be indicated by the plural form of “heaven”, as the LXX passages which mention a “skyquake” have singular οὐρανός. Verheyden, “Describing the Parousia,” 536-40, who doubts an influence from the Hebrew text, adduces some evidence for that Mark may have combined the LXX text with another recension which rendered Isa 34:4a.

¹⁵ *Apoc. Adam* 5:10 refers to the sun and moon as “the eyes of the powers of the luminaries.” Gärtner, (*Markus*, 327) favours angelic rulers over stars. Gundry combines the first two options, arguing that “the powers in heavens” are synonymous with “stars” (*Mark*, 782-83). Marcus (*Mark*, 907-08) suggests that it may be a reference to evil cosmic powers (cf. Eph 6:12) and their final defeat. While this option is a possible reading in the light of the centrality of Jesus’ struggle with the demons in Mark (e.g., 1:24; 3:23-27; 5:7), the immediate context seems to favour the heavenly bodies. B. M. F. van Iersel, “The Sun, Moon, Stars of Mark 13,24-25 in a Greco-Roman Reading,” *Bib* 77 (1996):84-92, proposes that Greco-Roman readers would associate, not only the heavenly powers, but sun, moon, and stars with deities, and that the passage depicts the dethronement of idols. Though it cannot be excluded that a Greco-Roman reader or hearer would make this connection, Greco-Roman readers also used these nouns to refer to the physical entities. They could equally well take a more literal

explicit mentioning of “skyquakes” in three of four passages (Isa 13:13; Joel 2:10; 4:16; implicitly in the fourth [Isa 34:4]) which constitute the background of Mark 13:24-25 seem to support the first alternative;¹⁶ the referent to “the powers in the heavens” should probably be seen as a summary, indicating the universal, cosmic scope of the event.¹⁷ What is envisaged for the coming of Jesus is thus nothing less than a return to the state of creation before the fourth day, indeed an undoing of the creation of the heavenly luminaries (Gen 1:14-19; cf. the mentioning of the creation in 13:19).¹⁸

We may now also ask whether the glorious coming of the Son of Man itself is causing these extraordinary celestial phenomena or if they are attributed to the creator (13:19). The contrast between the heavenly powers (αἱ δυνάμεις) and the great power of the coming one (μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς) may indeed suggest that the latter displaces the former.¹⁹ Furthermore, in the OT the coming or the presence of God generally causes the earth to tremble, which would point to the Son of Man here.²⁰ There is possibly also a link between the signs and wonders of the false Christs and prophets mentioned in 13:22 and the celestial phenomena, if we interpret the latter in accordance with Joel 3:3-4 (LXX 2:30-31): “I will give wonders (δῶσω τέρατα) in the heaven and on earth... the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood...”²¹ If a contrast is intended it may serve to highlight the difference between the “wonders” caused by false Christs and “the wonder” of the true Christ at his coming.²²

approach (see F. G. Downing, “Common Strands in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Eschatologies in the First Century,” *TZ* 51 [1995]: 196-211). In this context, where the Son of Man is coming to the earth, this seems more likely.

¹⁶ So e.g., Klostermann, *Markus*, 153; Taylor, *Mark*, 518.

¹⁷ Grundmann, *Markus*, 269, who takes 13:24-25 as a *parallelismus membrorum* where the fourth line summarizes the first three parallel statements; Pesch, *Markus*, 303; Verheyden, “Describing the Parousia,” 547. Pesch and Verheyden differ as to the connotations of the OT texts; Pesch interprets them as references to judgment whereas Verheyden argues that they present a theophany of the Son of Man.

¹⁸ Pesch, *Markus*, 2:303; Gundry, *Mark*, 782; Marcus, *Mark*, 907.

¹⁹ So Grundmann, *Markus*, 269; Marcus, *Mark*, 908; Gundry leaves the question open (*Mark*, 783).

²⁰ In addition to several of the passages cited in note 11 above, see *T. Mos.* 10:3-5. Marcus, *Mark*, 917, suggests that the reference to Jesus’ words as outlasting heaven and earth (13:31) means that they “will be God’s potent weapons for the demolition and renewal of cosmos.” He further contends that when other Christians presented Christ as God’s agent at the creation (John 1:3; Col 1:16), Mark stressed his role in “the destructive and re-creative work at the end.”

²¹ Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 157, n. 35, who also notes that *Tg. Jon.* reads “signs” in Joel 3:3.

²² Cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:63-70 where Belial makes signs in the heaven.

To sum up 13:24-25, elements from four OT day of YHWH texts are conflated to describe the circumstances at the coming of the Son of Man. To these are added the verb σαλεύω which in the OT commonly describes events at the coming of God. Its usage here, however, goes beyond the regular theophanic usage in the OT, where God causes earthquakes; in Mark it refers to the shaking of all cosmic powers.

In verse 26, the Son of Man is described as ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης.²³ This clearly alludes to Dan 7:13-14.²⁴ But, it is not a quotation and there are a number of striking differences between the two passages. To begin with, in Daniel the seer himself has a vision (LXX: θεωρέω), but Mark has ὁράω in the future tense, which, when used together with δόξα in the OT usually refers to “the promise of God’s eschatological self-manifestation.”²⁵ In this case, the third person plural ὄψονται may be an impersonal plural or refer to the elect, or the false Christs and prophets, or even the heavenly bodies mentioned in the preceding verses.²⁶ Presumably all, opponents as well as believers, are in view, indicating again the universal scope of the Son of Man’s coming.²⁷

Next, the Son of Man is coming ἐν νεφέλαις. Clouds are normally God’s mode of transport or presence²⁸ and the imagery has already been associated with God in Mark (9:7). It is likely that it indicates a divine status of the figure in

²³ Some scholars argue that Jesus is going to God rather than coming from God. See e.g., R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and his Mission* (London: Tyndale, 1971): 139-48; idem, *Mark*, esp. 530-37; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God: Volume Two* (London: SPCK, 1996): 360-67; 510-19). For a convincing refutation, see D. C. Allison “Jesus and the Victory of Apocalyptic,” in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God* (ed. C. C. Newman; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 126-41; E. Adams, “The Coming of the Son of Man in Mark’s Gospel,” *TynBul* 56 (2005): 39-61; Evans, *Mark*, 328-29.

²⁴ Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 156-58, argues that 13:24-27 is a midrash based on Dan 7:13-14 which is expanded with other texts; for a critique of the midrash thesis, see Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 262-66.

²⁵ C. C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (NovTSup 69; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 191-92, citing LXX Ps 101:17; Isa 35:2; 40:5-6; 60:2; 66:18-19.

²⁶ See Gundry, *Mark*, 783; Marcus, *Mark*, 904. Beasley-Murray (*Jesus and the Last Days*, 428-29) argues that “seeing” the Son of Man has connotations of both judgment and salvation in Mark (cf. 9:1; 14:62).

²⁷ So also e.g., Grundmann, *Markus*, 269; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:361, n. 231. There is, perhaps, an allusion to Isa 40:5 (“all flesh shall see the glory of YHWH”). God’s own coming is depicted as a universal event in Isa 26:21; 59:15b-20; 64:1-3; 66:15-18; Ps 96:13; Zech 14:1-9.

²⁸ E.g., Exod 13:21; 19:9; 24:16; 34:5; Lev 16:2; Num 11:25; 12:5; 14:14; Deut 1:33; 2 Sam 22:12 (LXX); Pss 17:12-13; 96:2; 103:3 (LXX); Isa 19:1; Jer 4:13; Ezek 1:4; Nah 1:3; Zech 2:17 (LXX); Sir 24:4 (divine wisdom).

Daniel.²⁹ Again, however, Mark differs slightly from Daniel. The MT of Dan 7:13 says that the “one like a son of man” comes “*with* (עִם)” the clouds³⁰ whereas the LXX has “*on* (ἐπὶ) clouds”.³¹ Mark differs from both by using the preposition ἐν. The significance of this should perhaps not be pressed, especially since Mark has μετὰ in 14:62, but it is worth pointing out that God usually comes or is present “in” a cloud in the OT.³²

What clearly distinguishes the description of the figure in the clouds in Mark from Dan 7:13, however, is the addition of the words μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης. Some see here an allusion to the “dominion, glory, and kingdom” given to the Danielic figure (7:14),³³ but the Markan terms are found neither in the LXX nor the Theodotion text of Dan 7:14. Instead, both OT usage and the Markan context suggest that “power” and “glory” are divine attributes which the coming one shares with God.³⁴ The combination of these appears once, in LXX Ps 62:3 (cf. LXX 144:11), to describe the Psalmist’s seeing of God in the temple (τοῦ ἰδεῖν τὴν

²⁹ C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 178-83; J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 290, who also points out (citing J. A. Emerton and A. Feuillet) that if the coming on a cloud in Dan 7:13 does not refer to divine being it would be the only exception in the OT. Gundry (*Mark*, 784) objects that clouds sometimes are used by God to transport his chosen ones (e.g., 1 En. 14:8; 2 En. 2:8; T. Abr. 10:1 [Rec. A]; 8:3 [Rec. B]; 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 11:12). In these cases, however, human beings are taken up on clouds and the direction is toward heaven, whereas in Mark, Jesus, like God, is coming from heaven towards the earth. For an example of the archangel Michael coming down in clouds, see T. Abr. 9:8 [Rec. A] (to bring the vehicle for Abraham’s flight over the earth). See also D. E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC; Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 1998), 625, but his distinctions are sometimes somewhat artificial and not all passages fall into the appropriate category or they fail to mention clouds. For the various interpretations of the one like a son of man in Dan 7:13, see Collins, *Daniel*, 308-310.

³⁰ This reading is followed by Theodotion and the Vulgate and also attested in Mark 14:62 and Rev 1:7.

³¹ Also in Matt 24:30; 26:64; Rev 14:14.

³² Exod 13:21; 19:9; 34:5; Lev 16:2; Num 11:25; 12:5; Deut 1:33; 2 Sam 22:12 (LXX); Ps 17:12-13 (LXX), apart from 2 Sam 22:12 and Ps 17:12-13 always followed by the singular cloud; but see Zech 2:17 (LXX) for a reference to God being present in or on his holy clouds (pl.). The view of G. Dalman (*Die Worte Jesu: Band I* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1898], 198) and others that the deity travels *upon* the clouds and lesser beings *in* or *with* the clouds cannot be maintained.

³³ E.g., L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 33; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 429.

³⁴ *Power*: e.g., Deut 3:24; Josh 4:24; 1 Chr 29:11; Job 12:13; 26:3 (LXX); LXX Pss 20:14; 45:1; 58:17; 65:3; 67:35; 76:15; 139:8; 144:4; Jer 16:21; Jdt 13:4; sometimes used synonymously with God’s name (LXX Ps 53:3; Jer 16:21); see further G. Friedrich, “δύναμις,” *EDNT* 1:356; W. Grundmann, “δύναμις,” *TDNT* 2:290-299. *Glory*: Exod 16:10; 24:16; 33:22; 40:34; Num 14:10, 21; Pss 18:2; 23:7; 28:1-3; 71:19; 95:3, 7; 107:6; Isa 6:3; 48:11; Ezek 1:28; 10:18; 11:23; see further G. H. Davies, “Glory,” *IDB* 2:401-3; S. Aalen, “Glory,” *NIDNTT* 2:44-48; G. Kittel “δόξα,” *TDNT* 2:242-49. Kittel characterizes glory as the “divine mode of being” (p. 247).

δύναμίν σου καὶ τὴν δόξαν σου).³⁵ Moreover, both God's power and glory are associated with the divine clouds.³⁶ In the case of δόξα there can be little doubt that this is God's own glory, for Mark has already told his readers that the Son of Man will come ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ (8:38).³⁷ "Power" is also explicitly linked to God in Mark; it will soon function as a substitute for the divine name (14:62). δύναμις πολλή may, however, also refer to the heavenly host of angels.³⁸ Taken in this sense, 13:26 with slight variation repeats the statement in 8:38, namely that the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father *with* the holy angels, and anticipates the explicit mentioning of angels in the following verse. What perhaps speaks against this interpretation is the reversal of the order of "glory" and "angels" in 13:26. The original order of 8:38 would also lead more naturally to the mentioning of the angels' action in 13:27. In view of this it may be more likely that δύναμις πολλή refers to Jesus' own attribute³⁹ than to the angels who are accompanying him, even though Jesus' power is manifested also by the angels who serve him. But, regardless of whether we take δύναμις as a reference to Jesus' power or the heavenly host, the attribution of δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης to the one coming in the clouds clearly reinforces his divine identity and contrasts sharply with the darkened creation.⁴⁰

The climax of the passage states that the Son of Man will "send out the angels"⁴¹ and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the

³⁵ Though it cannot be proven, it is tempting to see an allusion to this idea in 13:26; the power and glory of God can no longer be seen in the temple (cf. 15:38), but will be seen (by all) in Jesus (cf. Edwards, *Mark*, 403-404).

³⁶ *Power*: LXX Ps 67:35; *Glory*: Exod 16:10; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; Ezek 1:4; 10:4.

³⁷ This is also noted by Collins, *Mark*, 615, but she fails to notice the remarkable fact that God shares his own glory with another being. See below.

³⁸ J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1953], 152; Gundry, *Mark*, 786. In the LXX δύναμις sometimes refers to armies including the heavenly one (Exod 12:41; 1 Kgs 20:19; 2 Chr 18:18; LXX Ps 32:6; Ezek 38:15); δύναμις πολλή has the sense "mighty army" in 2 Chr 24:24; Ezek 38:15. The move of πολλή from power to glory in Matt 24:30 changes the meaning, according to Gundry, *Matthew*, 488.

³⁹ So most scholars.

⁴⁰ So also e.g., Gnllka, *Markus*, 2:201; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 429-30; Marcus, *Mark*, 908. Cf. 4 Ezra 7:40-43 where the darkened creation is illuminated by the glory of God (cf. also 2 Bar. 21:23-25).

⁴¹ Several manuscripts (Σ, A, C, Θ, Ψ, etc.) add αὐτοῦ, "his angels." This is probably due to a harmonization to the Matthean parallel (Matt 24:31) and general Matthean usage (cf. 13:41; 16:27). The shorter reading is to be preferred (B, D, L, W, etc.), but it hardly indicates a less exalted view of Jesus' relationship to the angels. While Matthew's reading may imply that a special group of angels has been set aside for Jesus, Mark's does seem to assume that all angels ("the angels") accompany the Son of Man (cf. the use of definite article in 1:13; 8:38; 13:32).

ends of heaven.” The latter half of the verse is generally regarded as a conflation of three passages (Deut 30:4; Isa 43:5-6; Zech 2:10 [LXX]),⁴² which all three incorporate the common theme in the biblical and Jewish literature that the dispersed people of God will be gathered from the whole earth⁴³ and which in some cases also comprise the Gentiles.⁴⁴ The OT, often emphatically, attributes this to God, sometimes associating it with his coming,⁴⁵ but in Mark Jesus carries out the task, or to be more precise, the angels under the direction of Jesus. The angels are thus portrayed as servants or agents of Jesus. This is not a completely new idea to Mark’s audience. Jesus has already predicted that he will return accompanied by the holy angels in 8:38 and at the beginning of the Gospel angels serve (διακονέω) Jesus during his 40 days stay in the desert (1:13).⁴⁶ Some scholars, again, see an allusion to Dan 7:10, which depict myriads of angels surrounding God and serving (λειτουργέω) him.⁴⁷ Whether or not this is the case, we have here another example of a striking transfer from God to Jesus,⁴⁸ for in the OT the angels accompany God, often in connection with theophanies, and God supervises and commands them,⁴⁹ a view which is maintained in the early Jewish literature.⁵⁰ Chief angels are of course

⁴² Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 158; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 432-33.

⁴³ Neh 1:9; Pss 50:4-5; 106:47; 107:2-3; Isa 11:11-12; 27:12-13; 56:8; 66:18; Jer 23:3; 29:14; 31:8; 32:37; Ezek 11:16-17; 20:34, 41; 28:25; 34:11-16; 36:24; 37:9; 39:27-28; Zech 10:6-12; Tob 13:13; 14:7; Bar 5:5-6; 2 Macc 1:27; 2:7, 18; Ps. Sol. 8:28; 11:3; T. Ash. 7:6-7.

⁴⁴ Isa 66:18; Zech 2:6, 11; perhaps also Isa 45:6.

⁴⁵ Ps 50:1-5; Isa 66:15-18.

⁴⁶ Mark 1:13 does not necessarily depict the angels as subordinate servants of Jesus and imply a divine status for him (contra J. C. Naluparayil, *The Identity of Jesus in Mark: An Essay on Narrative Christology* [Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta 49; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2000], 526), but when read in the light of these later passages it could easily be inferred.

⁴⁷ E.g., Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 432.

⁴⁸ These constant transfers of divine attributes and prerogatives to the Son of Man make one wonder if the Old Greek version to Dan 7:13 was known to Mark. According to this, the one like a son of man did not “come to” (ἔως; so the Theodotian text), but “as [ὥς] the Ancient of Days,” thus being identified as the Ancient of Days himself. Many scholars think this variant is found behind Rev 1:13-14 (Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 98; Collins, *Daniel*, 311). On the OG text of Dan 7:13, see L. T. Stuckenbruck, “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’ in the Old Greek Recension of Daniel 7,13: Scribal Error or Theological Translation?,” *ZNW* 86 (1995): 268-76; cf. also M. Hengel, “Sit at My Right Hand!,” in idem, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 183-84.

⁴⁹ Gen 28:12-13; 32:1-2; Deut 33:2; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18; Job 1:6; Pss 29:1; 68:17; 82:1; 89:6-8; Dan 7:10; Zech 14:5. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:364.

⁵⁰ E.g., 2 Esd 19:6; 1 En. 1:9; 61:10; 2 Bar. 51:11; T. Abr. 9:8. The Messiah is never accompanied by angels at his coming (Str-B 1:973; T. F. Glasson, *The Second Advent: The Origin of the New Testament Doctrine* [2nd rev. ed.; London: Epworth, 1947], 31; Kittel, “ἄγγελος,” *TDNT* 1:84-85; Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics*, 149). In 1 En. 61:10 the implied subject must be God as the Elect One is among those who are summoned, and those accompanying the Messiah in 4 Ez. 7:28 are not angels,

in charge of other heavenly beings⁵¹ and Michael has the angelic army at his disposal in the cosmic conflict with Satan and his angels,⁵² but it is doubtful that we should read Mark's description of Jesus' eschatological coming against the background of these passages. Mark never places Jesus among the angels as one of them, but above them in the heavenly hierarchy (cf. 13:32).⁵³ Furthermore there is, as far as I am aware, no evidence that Michael was thought to descend with the heavenly host in order to gather the elect.⁵⁴ This was God's task. *1 En.* 1:3-9, for example, which is strikingly close to Mark 13:24-27, states that *God* will "emerge from heaven with a mighty power" (1:4) accompanied by millions of angels (1:9) to carry out judgment.⁵⁵

There should be no doubt then that Jesus' relationship to the angels is that of Israel's God.⁵⁶ This view gets further confirmation if Gaston is correct that the background of the passage is not to be sought in Dan 7:10 but in Zech 14:5 where Zechariah prophesies that *God* will come together with the angels.⁵⁷ The Zechariah passage is supported not only by the prominence of the theme of gathering in this context, including both the dispersed people of Israel and the nations (10:6-10; 14:2-3), but also by the allusion to this passage in Mark 8:38⁵⁸ as well as further links between Mark 13 and Zech 14. Mark observes, for example, that Jesus gave his eschatological speech "sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple" (13:3). This is close to Zech 14:4, one of only two OT passages mentioning the Mount of

but unspecified individuals, perhaps OT heroes (see M. E. Stone, *4 Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* [Hermeneia; Fortress: Minneapolis, 1990], 172, 215).

⁵¹ E.g., *1 En.* 60:4; *T. Abr.* 9:8; *3 Bar.* (Gk.) 11:6. Michael is called "the commander-in-chief of the powers above" in e.g., *T. Abr.* 9:3; 14:14. More often, however, God commands Michael and other angels (e.g., *T. Abr.* 9:8; *2 En.* 22:10; 33:11). See esp. *1 En.* 100:4-5 which resembles Mark 13:26-27.

⁵² 1QM 13:10; 11QM^{elch} 9-15; Rev 12:7. In 1QM 13:10 the Prince of Light (probably Michael; cf. 1QM 17:6-8) is in charge of an angelic army in the battle against Belial and his angels. This must, however, be balanced with statements in other passages which describes it as God's own battle (1QM 1:14-15; 12:7-9; 13:12-16; 14:16; 15:12-14).

⁵³ Cf. Hengel, "Sit at My Right Hand!," 221-22.

⁵⁴ But see the later, Christian *Apoc. Paul* 14, which has Michael descending from heaven "and with him the whole host of angels."

⁵⁵ *OTP* 1:13. 1:9 is cited with reference to Jesus in Jude 14. See also J. VanderKam, "The Theophany of Enoch I 3b-7,9," *VT* 23 (1973): 129-50. As in Mark, "the mighty power" may refer to the angelic host (138-39).

⁵⁶ So also e.g., Hurtado, *Mark*, 221; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 375; Evans, *Mark*, 329.

⁵⁷ Gaston, *No Stone*, 33-34; Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 156. Other passages which allude to Zech 14:5 when describing the parousia include Matt 25:31; 1 Thess 3:13; *Did.* 16:7-8.

⁵⁸ See below.

Olives (cf. 2 Sam 15:30), which says that God shall “stand on the Mount of Olives, opposite Jerusalem.”⁵⁹ The dimming of lights is mentioned in this context (14:6) as well as that this day is known (only) to YHWH (14:7), a phrase which is recalled in Mark 13:32.

A third and final element in 13:27 which points to a strong association of Jesus with God is the explicit identification of “the elect” as the Son of Man’s elect (οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ).⁶⁰ The idea of the elect is rooted in the OT conception of God’s choice of Israel to be his people and several biblical and early Jewish passages refer to Israel or the remnant as God’s elect, οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ/μου.⁶¹ This link between God and the elect appears also in Mark itself, a few verses earlier, in 13:20, where the phrase “the elect which he elected” identifies the elect as the Lord’s chosen ones. Virtually all scholars take Lord as a reference to God here, meaning that the elect belongs to both God (13:20) and Jesus (13:27).⁶² Or, to put it differently, the attribution of the elect to both God and Jesus creates an overlap between the two figures. Consequently, what can be said of God in relation to both the heavenly host and the chosen people can also be said of Jesus.

8.3. Mark 8:38, 14:62

Following several sayings which promise suffering for his followers, Jesus in 8:38 warns of the consequences of denying him and his teaching “when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels [ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων].” This description of the Son of Man’s coming is in many ways similar to 13:26-27, but it adds further details.

First, the glory with or in which the Son of Man comes is here specified as the glory of *his Father*. Contrary to the assertions of some commentators this does not diminish the Christological significance of the statement,⁶³ but intensifies it.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 869.

⁶⁰ The pronoun αὐτοῦ is omitted in D, L, W, Ψ, *f*¹, et al. It may have been dropped in order to avoid an attribution of the elect to both God (13:20) and the Son of Man. Cf. France, *Mark*, 536, n. 20.

⁶¹ E.g., Deut 14:2; 1 Chr 16:13; Pss 105:6, 43; 106:5; Isa 43:20; Isa 65:15, 23; Wis 3:9; 4:15; Sir 46:1; 2 Esd 15:21; 16:73-74; *Sib. Or.* 2:174. In *1 Enoch* “the Elect One” (a common title for the Son of Man) and “the elect ones” appear together in some passages (39:6-7; 40:5; 62:7) but the elect ones are not identified as the Son of Man’s elect. *1 En.* 51:2 could be read as if the Elect One (mentioned in 52:3) chooses those who are saved, but the preceding verses suggest that the pronoun refers to God.

⁶² See Johansson, “Kyrios in Mark,” 108-109.

⁶³ E.g., Ernst, *Markus*, 252; Marshall, *Luke*, 377. Luke’s ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων (9:26) either refers to the Son of Man’s own glory in distinction from that of the

Jesus is not depicted as coming in a glory of his own, but shares in the very glory of YHWH,⁶⁵ indeed a remarkable claim, in view of the biblical insistence that God's glory is uniquely his.⁶⁶ In Isa 42:8 YHWH declares, “*my glory I give to no other*,” a statement which is repeated again in 48:11, and serving to bring out the uniqueness of Israel's God in one of the most monotheistic portions of the Bible.⁶⁷ Given Mark's interest in Isaiah it is difficult to see that Mark would have missed them. Perhaps he saw Jesus' coming in divine glory as the fulfilment of Isa 40:5, “the glory of YHWH shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it” (cf. Isa 40:10; Mark 13:26), a promise which appears shortly after the words Mark cites in his introduction (Isa 40:3; 1:3).⁶⁸ Whether this connection is made or not, Jesus' participation in the divine attribute of glory seems to be yet another example of how Jesus in Mark shares in those aspects of God's divinity which reveal his superiority above all other gods and beings.⁶⁹

The second point regards the angelic retinue. Unlike Mark 13:26-27, this verse states explicitly that the Son of Man shall come accompanied by the angels. We have already observed that this is a role which belongs to God. The question is if

Father and that of the angels, or to the glory he shares with God *and* the angels, that is, the glory of the heavenly realm rather than the *divine* glory. In Matt 25:31, the Son of Man comes in his own glory (but cf. Matt 16:27). A similar distinction between the glory of the Messiah and the glory of the Lord may be found in *Pss. Sol.* 17:31-32 if Horbury's reading is correct (*Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* [London: SCM, 1998], 103). Horbury argues that this is an adaptation of Isa 66:18 (“they shall see my [God's] glory”). As Bauckham (*Jesus*, 228 n. 115) points out, however, the correct reading may be “her [Jerusalem's] glory” rather than “his [the Messiah] glory,” alluding to Isa 55:5; 60:1-3.

⁶⁴ Rightly noted by e.g., Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 172: “die Wendung des Mk [ist] tiefer und grösser, denn in ihr ist die Herrlichkeit des Vaters auch die des Menschensohnes”; McNeile, *Matthew*, 247; Gnllka, *Markus*, 2:26; Marcus, *Mark*, 620.

⁶⁵ E.g., Exod 16:7; 24:16; 40:34; Lev 9:6; *1 En.* 14:20; 25:3; 27:3; etc. See further n. 34 above.

⁶⁶ There may be a close parallel in the longer recension of *2 En.* 22:8-10, where Enoch is clothed into “the clothes of my [God's] glory” and made one of the angels of the highest rank. The shorter recension lacks the pronoun and does not specify the glory. Also without specifying the glory, similar descriptions of all the righteous are found in *1 En.* 62:15-16; *2 Bar.* 51:10. Some texts also relate how the righteous reflect the glory of God (*1 En.* 38:4; for rabbinic statements about Moses, see Kittel, *TDNT* 2:246).

⁶⁷ Cf. G. von Rad, “δόξα,” *TDNT* 2:241. In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, his Jewish interlocutor cites Isa 42:8 to counter the claim that Jesus shares the divine glory (*Dial.* 65:1). Justin's response is to argue that God does not give his glory to *any other* than the *light* to the nations mentioned in 42:6, which is further identified with God's name in 42:8. See Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 387.

⁶⁸ L. H. Brockington, “The Greek Translator of Isaiah and His Interest in ΔΟΞΑ,” *VT* 1 (1951): 23-32, notes that for the LXX translator of Isaiah δόξα is an appropriate term “to use in relation to the appearance of God in theophany” and that this is linked to the concern for salvation (31-32).

⁶⁹ For Chrysostom this passage supported the unity of the Father and the Son: “Seest thou how the glory of the Father and of the Son is all one? But if the glory be one, it is quite evident that the substance also is one” (*Homily on Matt 16:24*; *NPNF*¹ 10:327).

we can be more precise with the OT background of this statement. As is the case with Mark 13:26-27, scholars tend to read 8:38 against Daniel 7. But apart from the image of a coming Son of Man very little points in that direction. More probable is that the reference to the holy angels is an allusion to Zech 14:5: “Then YHWH my God will come, and all the holy ones with you” which the LXX renders, καὶ ἔξει κύριος ὁ θεός καὶ πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ.⁷⁰ This text figured prominently in early Christian descriptions of the parousia⁷¹ and seems to have been the main source for the angelic accompaniment of Jesus at his return.⁷² Indeed, as Adams points out, “it is precisely by means of this allusion that the idea of Jesus’ parousia, his end-time advent, is created,” that is, the reversal of the movement to God in Daniel’s vision to his coming to the earth in Mark.⁷³ Like several of the other passages which allude to Zech 14:5, Mark adds the word ἄγγελοι to clarify the meaning of οἱ ἅγιοι, but in distinction from most of these other cases ἅγιοι is here also retained (cf. Matt 16:27; 25:31⁷⁴; 2 Thess 1:7; *Sib. Or.* 2:242) with the result that *holy* angels will accompany the coming one. Mark clearly knew and used Zechariah (cf. 14:27).⁷⁵ In view of this and its general importance for the early Christian conception of Jesus’ return with angels, it is probable that Zech 14:5 lies behind the description of the Son of Man in 8:38. This passage should then be included among those NT passages which quote or allude to OT texts about YHWH and which have Jesus as referent in the NT context (cf. Mark 1:3).⁷⁶

Finally, a brief comment on 14:62, where Jesus claims that his opponents will see him “seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

⁷⁰ Cf. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics*, 149-52; McNeile, *Matthew*, 247; O. F. J. Seitz, “The Future Coming of the Son of Man: Three Midrashic Formulations in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Studia Evangelica* vol. 6 (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), 478-94, 490-91; Pesch, *Markus*, 2:65; France, *Mark*, 342; Adams, “Coming of the Son of Man,” 51-52; Marcus, *Mark*, 620. On the various renderings of Zech 14:5, see R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 511.

⁷¹ Zech 14:5 is cited in *Did.* 16:7 and alluded to in Matt 16:27; 25:31; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7; Rev 19:14; *Apoc. Pet.* 1 (Ethiopic); *Ascen. Isa.* 4:14; *Sib. Or.* 2:242; 8:221.

⁷² R. J. Bauckham, “A Note on a Problem in the Greek Version of I Enoch i. 9,” *JTS* 32 (1981): 136-38. Some influence from Deut 33:2 and Ps 68:17 is also probable. Depending on how widely *I Enoch* was used in Early Christianity *I En.* 1:9, which is cited in Jude 14, may be another source. In all of these passages God is the subject.

⁷³ Adams, “Coming of God,” 10.

⁷⁴ The addition of ἅγιοι in some manuscripts, including A and the majority text, may be due to influence of Mark 8:38.

⁷⁵ See e.g., Marcus, *Way*, 154-164.

⁷⁶ For a convenient list of some of these, see Bauckham, *Jesus*, 186-88; 219-21.

This statement basically repeats 13:26. One element is, however, new, the seating at the right hand of God. This leads to the question how the session relates to the coming. Does the Son of Man sit on the heavenly throne while coming, or does he rise from the throne where he has been sitting before coming? The latter interpretation evokes a picture which reminds us of the theophany in *T. Mos.* 10:3-7, where God rises from the heavenly throne and descends while being seen by all to the earth to take vengeance on the nations.⁷⁷ But the throne is not necessarily stationary; it may be God's mobile chariot throne, depicted in Ezek 1 and Dan 7:9,⁷⁸ and the coming of Jesus may be similar to the coming of the Glory of YHWH in manlike form which Ezekiel relates in his first chapter.

8.4. The Coming of Jesus in Mark and Other Exalted Eschatological Figures

In his 1966 study of Jewish apocalyptic texts, Hartmann observed that the various theophanic phenomena which accompany God's intervention in the events of the last days in these texts usually do not appear in texts where a representative of God is introduced.⁷⁹ He was, however, able to point out a couple of exceptions to the general rule, primarily the depiction of the Son of Man in *4 Ezra* 13, and to some extent the Son of Man in *1 Enoch*. Before drawing our conclusions about Jesus' coming to the earth in Mark, we need to look at these texts.

In the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 En.* 37-71), the primary function of the messianic figure, sometimes referred to as the Son of Man, but more often (and more accurately) as the Chosen One, is to execute judgment from the divine throne of glory.⁸⁰ The day of his judgment is called "the day of the Chosen One" at one place

⁷⁷ Adams, "Coming of the Son of Man," 59-60.

⁷⁸ Evans, *Mark*, 452.

⁷⁹ Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 35-36.

⁸⁰ Unlike Matthew, where it almost has the function of a leitmotif (see J. Gnilya, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History* [trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997], 159), there is very little on Jesus as judge in Mark. Mark 8:38 portrays a judgment scene ("of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed [ἐπαισχυνθήσεται αὐτόν] when he comes"), but it is not entirely clear whether Jesus pronounces a sentence or gives evidence before the court (Hooker, *Mark*, 210). The lack of any reference to God and the angels (cf. the parallel in Matt 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9; in Mark the angels are Jesus' entourage) implies the former (cf. Gnilya, *Markus*, 1:25-26). This is also supported by LXX usage of the verb αἰσχύνομαι, which usually refers to God's judgment (e.g., LXX Pss 6:10; 43:10; 118:31, 116; Isa 41:11; 44:11; Jer 48:20; Joel 2:27; see Bultmann, "αἰσχύνομαι, κτλ," *TDNT* 1:189-91). For some scholars, judgment is also in view in 13:26 and 14:62. In 13:26, this is based on the combination of allusions in 13:24-25 to OT texts which in their original contexts refer to God's judgment (Pesch, *Markus*, 2:303-04) or indicated by the verb ὀψονταί interpreted against its usage in *1 En.* 62:3, 10 (Gnilya, *Markus*, 2:201; for a detailed overview and critique, see Verheyden,

(61:5), perhaps an allusion to the OT day of YHWH.⁸¹ A few passages relate what may be upheavals in nature in his presence. *1 En.* 51:4 uses the language of Ps 114:4 to describe the joy felt when the Chosen One has arisen: “mountains shall dance like rams.” In 52:6 six mountains of various metals melt like wax before the fire in his presence. The passage virtually cites Mic 1:4 and recalls other biblical theophanies (Ps 97:5; Nah 1:5; Mic 1:4; cf. also Jdt 16:15) as well as the coming of God in *1 En.* 1:6. Nevertheless, this imagery appears in an allegory with the basic meaning that metals, such as gold and iron, will be of no use during the Chosen One’s reign. Thus, the existing conditions at this time are depicted rather than a theophany.⁸² In 53:7, probably drawing on Hab 3:6 and Mic 1:4, it is said that the mountains shall become level land before the face or righteousness⁸³ of the Chosen One and the hills like a fountain of water. Also in this context it is clear that mountains and hills of the earth are not in view; they function as metaphors for sinners. No doubt, OT theophanic texts are applied to the Chosen One. But, in comparison to, for example, *1 Enoch* 1,

“Describing the Parousia,” 525-34). ὁφονταί is interpreted along the same lines in 14:62 (F. H. Borsch, “Mark XIV.62 and 1 Enoch LXII.5,” *NTS* 14 [1968]: 565-67; Marcus, *Way*, 166-67). The presence of the motif of seeing in martyrological traditions, noted by Pesch (Wis 5:2; Rev 11:12; *Apoc. El.* 5:27-28), demonstrates, however, that the one who is seen not necessarily will function as judge. That the idea is present in Mark 14:62 cannot be excluded, but it is then rather the trial scene itself and the reversal of it suggested by Jesus’ words which implies this: those who now judge Jesus will be judged by him when he returns in glory. It should also be noted that the second parable of the sower (4:26-29) applies a classic OT last judgment text (Joel 4:13) to the sower who probably represents Jesus. Thus, if we by “judgment” mean a court scene in which Jesus is acting as judge (cf. God in Dan 7:9-10), only 8:38 comes close (cf. Matt 25: 31-46; 2 Cor 5:10). This is not without parallel in the early Jewish and Christian literature, however. A similar role is attributed to the Chosen One in *1 Enoch* (45:3; 55:4; 62:2-5; 69:29) and Abel in *T. Abr.* 12; 13:1-8, though, as Hurtado (*One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* [2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 53) notes, in *1 Enoch* the Chosen One seems to judge on God’s behalf (55:4: “in the name of the Lord of the Spirits”), and Abel’s judgment is the first step in a process and will later be confirmed by God. In early Christianity, participation in the judgment was envisaged for the twelve (Matt 19:28) and Christians in general (1 Cor 6:2). The other Markan passages are, however, pertinent to the issue if we assume a wider definition of “judgment” which in a more general way refers to judgment and salvation, as indeed many OT day of YHWH texts do. The description of the coming of Jesus to judge (explicit in 8:38) and save (explicit in 13:26) is particularly close to the description of God in *1 En.* 1:3-9. But a similar role is attributed to the Messiah in some early Jewish texts (11QM^{elch} 2:13; 4 *Ezra* 12:31-34; 13:37-38; 2 *Bar.* 40:1; 72:2; see also Stone, 4 *Ezra*, 386-87, on the biblical background for the Messiah’s function as judge). In view of this evidence, it seems to me that it is not so much the participation of Jesus as judge which is remarkable, but that the outcome for each individual is dependent on the their relationship to Jesus (see chapter 9).

⁸¹ D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTSMS 107; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 100. I express some doubts, however, about the reliability of the text in this passage. M. Black (*The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition* [Leiden: Brill, 1985], 232) proposes the emendation “on the Name of the Elect One” (cf. 61:3), which seems to make sense in the context (cf. also 48:4).

⁸² Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 36 n. 10.

⁸³ On the textual issues, see Black, *1 Enoch*, 218.

where God is the subject, the geophysical phenomena seem to have a clearly metaphorical function, being various ways to depict the Chosen One's power over and judgment of his enemies. If we further compare them to Mark they are much more limited in scope. We must also note that almost every other significant feature in Mark is lacking in *1 Enoch*'s portrayal of the Son of Man: there are no allusions to day of YHWH texts, the Chosen One is not descending to the earth, coming in clouds or with YHWH's glory,⁸⁴ he is not accompanied by angels which he sends, nor does he choose the elect or gather them. I do not intend to downplay the very exalted portrait of the Son of Man which *1 Enoch* provides,⁸⁵ I only note that most divine roles in which the Markan Jesus will act at his coming are absent from the description in *1 Enoch*.

In *4 Ezra* 13:3-4 someone like a man arises out of the sea, he flies with the clouds of heaven,⁸⁶ everything under his gaze trembles, and when he speaks all who hear his voice melt "as wax melts when it feels the fire." The man is clearly "the one like a son of man" in Dan 7:13, subsequently identified with the Messiah (vv. 25-26). The image of melting wax appears again, but is now applied to human beings rather than mountains, probably drawing on Ps 68:2 rather than Ps 97:5 and Mic 1:3. Trembling is, as already noted, a common motif in theophany descriptions. The source may in this case be either Ps 104:32 (cf. Hab 3:6) which refers to YHWH's look or Ps 97:4-5 which combines this motif with the image of melting wax. It should also be observed that these same motifs are used for God elsewhere in *4 Ezra* (8:21-23), thus leaving no doubt that the man acts in a divine capacity. Two further motifs link the man to God: He sends forth fire from his mouth to destroy his enemies (13:10-11; cf. Pss 18:8; 97:3; Isa 66:15-16) and he gathers a multitude of people to himself (13:12-13, 33-34),⁸⁷ the latter most likely an allusion to Isa 66:15-

⁸⁴ In *2 Bar.* 30:1, the Messiah returns to heaven "in glory."

⁸⁵ For his participation in the judgment, his sharing of the divine throne and the divine name, and the worship of him when he is seated at the throne of glory, see e.g., Bauckham, *Jesus*, 169-72; C. A. Gieschen, "The Name of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch," in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (ed. G. Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238-49.

⁸⁶ This may also be a divine act, as Stone notes (*4 Ezra*, 212 n. 38). But the man does not come from heaven nor does he ascend to heaven; much like Abraham (*T. Abr.* 10:1 [Rec. A]; 8:3 [Rec. B]) he flies through the sky looking down at the earth.

⁸⁷ Gathering of God's people or the nations is also attributed to the messianic agent in *Pss. Sol.* 17:26; *2 Bar.* 72:2.

21. Several supernatural and divine acts are thus undoubtedly attributed to the man, particularly from biblical descriptions of YHWH as warrior.⁸⁸

This description is also in several ways closer to Mark than *1 Enoch*: The man flies with the clouds; although more limited in scope, the typical reaction to theophanies is present; there are allusions to biblical passages about God; and the man gathers nations as well as the righteous to himself. As in *1 Enoch*, however, it is also clear that the author of *4 Ezra* understood at least some of these divine acts metaphorically. In the subsequent interpretation (13:25-52), the man is still a very powerful being, but the supernatural elements are downplayed or excluded.⁸⁹ His prior place in the sea symbolizes the hiddenness of the Messiah (13:52) and the fire which comes out of his mouth to destroy his enemies signifies how he will reprove them for their ungodliness and reproach them with their evil thoughts and coming punishment (13:37-38). The flying with the clouds and the motifs of trembling and melting like wax are not explained. But, as Burkett notes, given the non-literal interpretation of other features the author would probably consider them as metaphors, too.⁹⁰

To what extent, then, is the Markan description of Jesus' coming unique? Or to put it differently, does the participation of Jesus in acts that are ascribed to God in the Scriptures and early Jewish literature point to a divine identity, or were these acts already attributed to the expected Messiah(s) and rather evidence for a messianic identity? Anyone familiar with the relevant scholarly literature knows that this is a controversial and very much debated question. We shall have to come back and discuss this later when we draw our general conclusion about Mark's christology. For now, I would like to make two points with regard to the present subject.

The first is that there seems to be a much *broader application* of biblical traditions about Israel's God to Jesus in Mark's description of his coming, some of which are uniquely used for Jesus, and these, in many ways, go beyond what is attributed to the messianic agent in other early Jewish literature.

The attribution of day of YHWH texts to Jesus' coming seems to be without parallel. Moreover, the biblical "coming of God" tradition is, likewise, uniquely

⁸⁸ Stone, *4 Ezra*, 212, 384-87; Burkett, *Son of Man*, 105-06.

⁸⁹ Cf. Stone *4 Ezra*, 212; Burkett, *Son of Man*, 106-08.

⁹⁰ Burkett, *Son of Man*, 107.

applied to Jesus. Adams notes that elements from this tradition appear in the descriptions of the eschatological agents in the *Similitudes of Enoch* and *4 Ezra*, but in neither of these or any other passages is the figure coming from heaven to earth.⁹¹ Jesus' coming in Mark is much closer to the descriptions of God's own coming in *1 En.* 1:3-9 and *T. Mos.* 10:3-10.⁹² The latter text, just as Mark 13:24-27, combines the "coming of God" tradition with day of YHWH imagery (cf. also *L.A.B.* 19:13).⁹³

Also, Jesus' coming is unmistakably a theophany.⁹⁴ Although there are reactions of fear and signs accompanying the intervention of the man in *4 Ez.* 13, the cosmic scope of Jesus' coming, including both the nature of the signs and the trembling of the heavenly powers, clearly goes beyond that and these phenomena are only used with regard to God in the Jewish tradition.⁹⁵

Note also that the angelic entourage of Jesus, which does not seem to be limited to a special group of angels but includes the myriads of angels standing before God in Dan 7:10, appears also to be without parallel. Further, the gathering of God's people or the nations is attributed to the messianic agent in some Jewish literature (*Pss. Sol.* 17:26; *4 Ez.* 13:12-13, 33-34; *2 Bar.* 72:2), but there is no evidence that these agents conduct the angels' gathering in of people (cf. Matt 13:39, 41). Finally, we note that Mark, also uniquely, ascribes the elect to the Son of Man. They belong to both God (13:20) and the Son of Man (13:27).

My second point has to do with the possible influence of the traditions in *Similitudes of 1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* on the description of the Son of Man's coming in Mark. Of these, *4 Ezra* clearly postdates Mark,⁹⁶ whereas the date of the *Similitudes of 1 Enoch* is still under debate, although the majority view seems to hold to first

⁹¹ See Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," 262-65; on *4 Ezra* 13, see also Burkett, *Son of Man*, 108.

⁹² Cf. also *1 En.* 91:7; *Jub.* 1:27-29; *L.A.B.* 19:13.

⁹³ Glasson and Adams provide a strong argument that the background of the early Christian understanding of Jesus' second coming is to be found in the "coming of God" tradition, a tradition which has been directly applied to Christ and "to a significant degree Christologized" in its Christian transmission (Adams, "Coming of God," 19). Glasson ("Theophany and Parousia," 261-62) traces the connection between OT theophanies and the parousia of Christ in patristic writings down to Augustine.

⁹⁴ E.g., Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 424-25; Verheyden, "Describing the Parousia," 546-50.

⁹⁵ Verheyden, "Describing the Parousia," 547.

⁹⁶ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 9-10, dates the book to the latter half of Domitian's reign.

century C.E.⁹⁷ Of course, the ideas could have been around for some time even if the documents are later than Mark.⁹⁸ Even if that was the case, however, it seems unlikely that there is a direct influence of these ideas on Mark's description of the parousia. There are simply too few parallels.

On the other hand, the influence and elaboration of Daniel is no doubt clear in all three writings, as is the exalted description of the messianic agent, but as we have noted, there are many more applications of various divine roles to the Markan Jesus. It seems unlikely that already established messianic categories and functions have been applied to Jesus' coming. It is rather a matter of a direct application of OT texts to Jesus, and perhaps also early Jewish texts, about the coming of God. The description of Jesus' coming has, as already noted, more in common with early Jewish descriptions of God's coming (*1 En.* 1:3-9⁹⁹; *T. Mos.* 10:3-10) than with the messianic figures in the *Similitudes* and *4 Ezra*.

8.5. Conclusion

In Mark, as in most early Christian writings, the Jewish hope of God's coming and intervention on the day of YHWH and the eschatological roles of God associated with this event have been transferred to Jesus. In doing this, the portrayal of Jesus goes beyond the description of the one like a son of man in Daniel and the most exalted figures in early Jewish literature and suggests the closest possible association of Jesus with the God of Israel. The present chapter confirms the view of Bauckham that "much early Christian thinking about the parousia did not derive from applying OT messianic texts to Jesus but from the direct use of OT texts about the coming of God."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, early Christians, including Mark, seem to have identified God's own eschatological coming with the coming of Jesus.

⁹⁷ *OTP* 1:7. See also Burkett, *Son of Man*, 70-72; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 730-33.

⁹⁸ The earlier assumption, especially in German scholarship, of a unified Son of Man concept in early Judaism, in which a heavenly redeemer figure was expected to come from heaven to bring judgment and salvation, has come under severe criticism. See Burkett, *Son of Man Debate*, 68-81; cf. also Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," 262-63.

⁹⁹ Jude 14 demonstrates that early Christians applied this text to the *parousia* of Jesus. See M. Black, "The Maranatha invocation and Jude 14, 15 (1 Enoch 1:9)", in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule*, ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973): 189-96. Black even goes so far as suggesting that this text was the source of the early Christian *Maranatha* formula (but see the critique in R. J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1983], 97).

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 97.

9. The Relation between Jesus and His Followers

9.1. Introduction

In response to the scribe's question about the most important commandment, Jesus cites the first two verses of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-5):

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [καρδία] and with all your soul [ψυχή] and with all your mind [διάνοια] and with all your strength [ἰσχύς] (12:29-30).

And the scribe agrees:

You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart [καρδία] and with all the understanding [σύνεσις] and with all the strength [ἰσχύς] [...] is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (12:32-33).¹

Throughout the Gospel, Mark presents Jesus as one who loves God with his whole being.² Even when facing death he submits to the will of God (14:36). Jesus is, in other words, also in regard to the fulfilment of the most important commandment the ideal example to follow. But Jesus is more than that; he is himself the object for such devotion.

In the later rabbinic exposition of Deut 6:5 each element of the love command was assigned specific meaning: “with all your heart” referred to both the good and the evil inclinations of a human being, that is, with an undivided heart; “with all your soul” meant “even if he takes your soul”, that is, even at the cost of one's life; “with all your strength” referred to one's whole property.³ What is striking about the Gospel of Mark is Jesus' requirement of such loyalty to *his own person*:

¹ Neither of these renderings agrees exactly with LXX Deut 6:5: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [καρδία] and with all your soul [ψυχή] and with all your power [δύναμις].” The additional phrase in Jesus' response has been explained as an alternative translation of either the first or the third phrase in the Hebrew text. See Marcus, *Mark*, 837. On the different versions and main textual variants, see R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 22. For a discussion of how the Markan version of the passage relates to the Matthean, see B. Gerhardsson, *The Shema in the New Testament* (Lund: Novapress, 1996), 202-23.

² Marcus, *Mark*, 843.

³ See e.g., *m. Ber.* 9:5; *Siphre Deut.* 31-32. Further texts are cited in Gerhardsson, *Shema*, 15-18; R. E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 217.

Jesus demands undivided attention to his word (4:1-20; 7:1-23) and the kingdom of God (9:43-48); the disciples should be ready to suffer and die for the sake of him and the gospel (8:34-35); the disciples have left everything to follow Jesus (10:28-30).⁴ Apparently, Jesus is included in the devotion which, according to the *Shema*, should be offered to God alone.

Whether or not this rabbinic interpretation of the love command goes back to the first century,⁵ or Mark and his readers were familiar with it, there is nonetheless abundant evidence that the Markan Jesus in more than one way expected or was given such loyalty by his followers that God alone could demand. Or, to put it a little differently, there is an analogy between Jesus' relationship to his followers in Mark and YHWH's relationship to the people of Israel in the Scripture. This feature will be the focus of our attention in this chapter.

9.2. Devotion to Jesus unto Death

On a number of occasions Jesus makes clear that his followers will suffer persecution, even die for the sake of *him* and *his* word.⁶ Indeed, loyalty even unto death is necessary to be saved. The passages are as follows:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life [τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ] for my sake and the gospel's [ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου]⁷ will save it.” (8:34-35)

“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake [ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ], to bear witness before them.” (13:9)

⁴ Gerhardsson has traced this phenomenon in Matthew. See “Monoteism och högkristologi i Matteusevangeliet,” *SEÅ* 37-38 (1972-73):125-144, esp. 135-41. Watts, “Mark,” 219, also notes it. For an earlier discussion of this kind of devotion to Jesus in all three Synoptic Gospels, see S. Aalen, “Jesu kristologiske selvbevisshet: Et utkast til ‘jahvistisk kristologi’,” *TTKi* 40 (1969): 1-18.

⁵ Gerhardsson has in a number of studies, which are now collected in *The Shema in the New Testament*, tried to demonstrate that the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 6:5 went back to the first century and was known at least to Matthew. The interpretation of “all your strength” as referring to all one's property is attested already in Sir 7:30-31. This kind of piety is illustrated by the poor widow (Mark 12:42-44), who gives her whole life (τὸν βίον αὐτῆς) to the temple.

⁶ For a general study, see the chapter “To Live and Die for Jesus: Social and Political Consequences of Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity” in L. W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God: Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 56-82.

⁷ ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ is missing in p⁴⁵, D, 28, 700, it (sy^s). But since double expressions are in accordance with Mark's style they are probably original. See B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 1975), 99.

“And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake [διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου]. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (13:13)

“And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word [διὰ τὸν λόγον], immediately they fall away.” (4:17; cf. 10:29-30)

In addition to these, Jesus’ warning in 8:38 of being ashamed of him and his words (με καὶ τοὺς ἑμούς λόγους)⁸ assumes a situation where loyalty to Jesus is put to the test.⁹

Before looking more closely at these passages we must briefly outline the background against which they are to be understood.¹⁰ In the biblical and early Jewish literature persecution and martyrdom take place for the sake of God and his law. This is clear in the only really close OT parallel to Jesus’ saying in 8:35, Ps 44:22 [LXX 43:23]: “For your sake [ἐνεκα σοῦ] we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”¹¹ According to Kraus, the Psalm expresses the experience of a community facing persecution and martyrdom because of its commitment to YHWH.¹² The most well-known examples of this kind of persecution are, however, found in Dan 3 and 6.¹³ Both passages tell the story of how faithful Jewish men would rather risk their lives than giving up their faithfulness to God. In the prayer of Azariah this commitment appears to be linked to the *Shema*: “And now with our whole heart we follow and fear you,” Azariah declares to God in the middle of the fire (LXX Dan 3:41).

⁸ MS p⁴⁵ and W omit λόγους, but it is easier to account for an accidental omission of it than an insertion, since the word is present in a wide variety of different text types. See Metzger, *Commentary*, 99-100.

⁹ *Herm. Sim.* 9.14.6 appears to allude to this passage in a persecution context. In a similar context, *Herm. Sim.* 9.21.3 seems to allude to Mark 4:17 par and 8:38.

¹⁰ For a survey of martyrdom in early Judaism, see T. Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980), 6-65. Cf. also J. W. van Henten (ed.), *Die Entstehung der jüdische Martyrologie* (StPB 38; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

¹¹ Cf. also LXX Ps 68:8; Isa 51:7.

¹² H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (trans. H.C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 443-49. For another view, see J. Goldingay, *Psalms: Vol. 2: Psalms 42-89* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 47, who suggests that the community suffers because “God ignores their plight.” Whether or not the Psalm originally referred to suffering because of faithfulness to God, it is clear that both Paul (Rom 8:36) and the rabbis (see Str-B 3:259-60) used the passage in this sense.

¹³ For a helpful introduction to how these texts relate to the martyrdom texts proper, see J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (JSJSup 57; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 8-14.

These two stories were of fundamental importance for Jews. This can be seen in the martyrdom literature which frequently refers to the examples of the Danielic witnesses.¹⁴ In this literature we also find more direct parallels to Jesus' sayings. Suffering and martyrdom are here in various ways expressed to take place on account of God,¹⁵ the law,¹⁶ or for the sake of piety and religion.¹⁷ Faithfulness to the law is, of course, closely connected to faithfulness to God, since the law is "his law" (2 Macc 7:9, 23; cf. 1 Macc 3:48) and violation of a commandment, particularly in public, showed disrespect for the giver of the law.¹⁸ Suffering on account of God and the law can therefore sometimes be juxtaposed.¹⁹

This readiness to die for God was grounded in the belief that God is the sole creator (2 Macc 7:23, 37; 4 Macc. 11:5), the almighty and sole ruler of the universe, who has the power to raise up the faithful ones to eternal life (2 Macc 7:9; 4 Macc. 16:25).²⁰ Even if Josephus exaggerates, he points to a distinctive characteristic of the Jews when he compares their willingness to die for their laws and their faith with the lack in this regard among the Greeks (Ag. Ap. 1.42-44).²¹ Elsewhere, he notes how Jewish captives after the war, adults and children alike, rather were tormented than confessing that "Caesar was lord" (J.W. 7.417-19), for God alone was their Lord (J.W. 7.410). Although later than Mark, we should also mention the famous martyrdom of R. Akiba by the Romans in the first half of the second century.²² It took place during the time for the recital of the *Shema* and Akiba recited it while being tortured. The story tells that he extended the recital until his *soul* left him. The

¹⁴ 1 Macc 2:59-60; 3 Macc. 6:6-7; 4 Macc. 16:21.

¹⁵ 2 Macc 6:30; 3 Macc. 7:16; 4 Macc. 9:8; 10:20; 12:14; 16:18-21; 16:25; 17:20.

¹⁶ 1 Macc 1:63; 2:50; 2 Macc 7:9, 23, 30 3 Macc. 1:23; 4 Macc. 6:22-23, 27, 30; 13:9; T. Mos. 9:6.

¹⁷ 4 Macc. 9: 24, 29; 15:14, 31; 16:13.

¹⁸ Cf. 4 Macc. 5:14-36. See the discussion in van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 125-86; cf. also H. Anderson in *OTP* 2:538. In my view, A. Satake, "Das Leiden der Jünger 'um meinetwillen'," *ZNW* 67 (1976): 4-19, puts too much emphasis on that the Jews suffer on account of the law, in distinction from God (see esp. pp. 13, 16).

¹⁹ 3 Macc. 3:4; 4 Macc. 13:13; 16:24-25; negatively in 3 Macc. 7:10.

²⁰ See J. W. van Henten, "Das jüdische Selbstverständnis in den ältesten Martyrien," in van Henten, *Entstehung*, 138-39.

²¹ On the willingness to die for the city or friends in Antiquity, see M. Hengel, "The Atonement," in idem, *The Cross of the Son of God* (SCM: London, 1986), 187-284, 194-203. For examples of readiness to die for the gods in the Greco-Roman literature, see D. Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (JSNTSup 28; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 126, 128. On the political dimension of the Jewish resistance, see van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 187-269.

²² b. Ber. 61b; see Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 64.

point is obviously that Akiba in a very concrete and literal way fulfilled the command to love God “with all your *soul*” (Deut 6:5).

Outside the literature which deals directly with the distress of the Jews at the hands of foreign rulers there are occasional references to sufferings on account of God. For example, 2 *Enoch* exhorts its readers: “If the injury and persecution happen to you on account of the Lord, then endure them all for the sake of the Lord” (50:4).²³

The references to suffering for the sake of Jesus and his words are against this background striking. The absolute commitment shown to YHWH and the law in the Jewish tradition has in Mark become complete loyalty to Jesus and his words. Two things should be noted. First, it cannot be a matter of Jesus merely taking the place of the law so that Jesus somehow is a personification of the Torah. The repeated juxtapositions of Jesus and the gospel (8:35, 38; 10:29) indicate that his followers’ suffering is due to both the person of Jesus and the gospel.²⁴ The warning against denial of Jesus and his words (8:38) seems to have a close parallel in 3 *Macc.* 7:10, where transgression against “the holy God and his Law” is denounced.

Second, the suffering is not only caused by a mere dispute among the Jews about the correct interpretation of the law. Mark 13:9 assumes that Christians will be persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles²⁵ and 13:13 states that they will be hated by *all*. No doubt did they, like non-Christian Jews, reject the claims by the Roman emperors. For them, Jesus was the true Son of God, not Caesar.²⁶ It appears, then, that the kind of suffering envisioned for Jesus’ followers parallels the suffering the Jews had experienced and still were experiencing. The crucial difference is that

²³ *OTP* 1:176; similarly *T. Jud.* 25:4; cf. also *1 En.* 108:10.

²⁴ Against the view that καί is epexegetical in 8:35 (e.g., M. Horstmann, *Studien zur Markinischen Christologie: Mk 8,27-9,13 als Zugang zum Christusbild des zweiten Evangeliums* [NTAbh 6; Münster: Aschendorff, 1969], 44), see E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 40; Gundry, *Mark*, 454-55. Cranfield comments insightfully: “Whereas the prophets stand aside so that their message, not their person, is everything, Jesus and his words are inseparable” (*Mark*, 284).

²⁵ E.g., Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 87; Gundry, *Mark*, 739. Contra W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 154.

²⁶ On the use of this title for the Roman emperors, see Evans, *Mark*, lxxxii-lxxxiii.

where the latter showed the uttermost commitment to God and the Torah, the former must be ready to die for the sake of Jesus and his word.²⁷

A few more things should be observed with regard to two of the passages. First to 8:34-35.²⁸ The Christological implications of Jesus' claim here, not only to his message, but also to his person²⁹ tend to be overlooked.³⁰ Who can, in the words of the scribes (2:7), demand this but the one God?³¹ The Markan Jesus does, in fact, claim a direct connection between martyrdom for his sake and the eternal destiny of a human being (cf. 2 Macc 7).³² Moreover, when Jesus makes himself the object for a devotion which comes to expression in willingness to even give up one's ψυχή for his sake, this should probably be linked with the demand to love *God* with all one's soul/life (ψυχή) in the *Shema* (cf. 12:30). The implication is that Jesus' followers fulfil the greatest commandment by being faithful to *Jesus* and *the gospel* even unto death.

In 13:13 the reason for the hate against Jesus' followers is not as in earlier passages stated to take place "for my sake," but "for my name's sake [διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου]."³³ This expression can be understood in different ways. It can be taken to refer to the name "Jesus," and consequently indicating his followers' acknowledgement of

²⁷ Cf. Baumeister: "Die frühe Kirche hat die jüdischen Traditionselemente in entscheidenden Punkten modifiziert und den eigenen Intentionen dienstbar gemacht. Im Zentrum des christlichen Verfolgungsverständnisses steht die Bedeutung Jesu und der Gedanke der Nachfolge. Auch in Lebensgefahr darf man Jesus und seiner Botschaft nicht untreu werden" (*Anfänge*, 310; cf. 80). Cf. also Frend, *Martyrdom*, 79.

²⁸ For the meaning of taking up one's cross as readiness to die, see M. Hengel, "The Crucifixion," in idem, *The Cross of the Son of God*, 93-185.

²⁹ Lane, *Mark*, 308.

³⁰ An exception is A. Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (5th ed.; London: Scott, 1920), 157.

³¹ Josephus notes that during the siege of Jerusalem there were those under the command of Simon that so admired him that they would be willing to take their own lives if he commanded it (*J.W.* 5.309). But given its context it is questionable that it constitutes a real parallel to Jesus' demand. On the "charismatic leaders" of the Zealots, see Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 80-81. The Qumran covenanters are said to have shown faithfulness to the Teacher of Righteousness. 1QpHab 8.1-3 interprets Hab 2:4: "Its interpretation concerns all observing the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will free from the house of judgment on account of their toil and of their loyalty to the Teacher of Righteousness" (trans. García Martínez). But nowhere, to my knowledge, is it stated that they suffer on account of the teacher or that suffering for his sake will grant their salvation. For a brief discussion of martyrdom in the Qumran writings, see Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 35-37.

³² Gundry, *Mark*, 437. Lane, *Mark*, 308, notes a close rabbinic parallel: "Whoever preserves one word of the Law preserves his life, and whoever blots out one word of the Law will lose his life" (*'Abot R. Nat.* 2.35, at the earliest from the third century). Cf. also Bar 4:1; *T. Jud.* 25:4.

³³ Note the close parallel in John 15:19, 21. Cf. also Tacitus' famous comments about Christians (*Ann.* 15.44).

and identification with Jesus.³⁴ In this case, the use of Jesus' name parallels the use of God's name in the OT.³⁵ In a rather close parallel to Mark 13:13, YHWH declares, "Your brothers who *hate* you and cast you out *for my name's sake* have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame" (Isa 66:5).³⁶ But there is also the possibility that the name in question is not the name "Jesus" but the divine name YHWH, which Jesus on an early stage was believed to share with God (cf. Phil 2:9-11) and which Mark has applied to Jesus in the opening sentence (1:3). In this case, the reason for opposition may very well be this particular confession that Jesus possesses the divine name, at least among the Jews.³⁷ On either interpretation, the use of the expression "for my name's sake" suggests a close linking of Jesus to God.³⁸

In conclusion, then, the references to suffering and martyrdom in Mark refer all to the person of Jesus and his teaching. As similar references in the OT and early Jewish literature refer to YHWH and the Torah it appears that Jesus somehow stands in for God in this regard. The devotion which, according to the *Shema*, must be directed only to God should also be directed to Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus' designation in 8:38 of the generation that does not believe in him as "adulterous and sinful," which in the OT is a frequent charge against the people of God when they worship other gods,³⁹ suggests that loyalty to him is a presupposition for a faithful

³⁴ Pesch, *Markus*, 2:286; Gnllka, *Markus*, 2:192; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:187; France, *Mark*, 518.

³⁵ As Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 273, states: "Aber was einst von diesem Namen [Gottes] galt, das ist jetzt von Jesu Namen zu sagen." Cf. also L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 391; Gundry, *Mark*, 740. Keener notes that Jewish teachers "would not have called students to suffer for their own names," but God's. See *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2009), 171.

³⁶ The expression "for my name's sake" is, however, not found in the LXX translation.

³⁷ So C. A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *VC* 57 (2003): 115-58, 145, on the Matthean parallel (Matt 10:22). For this understanding of the name in John 15:21, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI* (AB 29a; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 687. Collins' suggestion that "name" specifically refers to "Christ" or "messiah" seems less likely (*Mark*, 607).

³⁸ Note also that the trial of Jesus probably serves as an illustration of two different and contrasting attitudes during persecution. On the one hand, there is Jesus' behaviour, which is an example of exemplary discipleship, on the other, and in stark contrast, there is Peter's threefold denial of Jesus, which seems to allude not only to Jesus' prediction regarding Peter and Peter's fervent willingness to confess then (14:30-31), but the general warnings directed to all his followers. Instead of faithfully confessing his loyalty to Jesus, Peter denies (ἀρνέομαι, 14:68, 70), perhaps even curses Jesus (ἀναθεματίζειν, 14:71; for this understanding, see Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 164-66, who also notes that the terms used here may reflect "more formal denial of Christ in a synagogue or Roman court setting" [166]). More than one in Mark's audience probably found it comforting that Jesus later restored Peter (16:7).

³⁹ Cf. e.g., Grundmann, *Markus*, 177; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 264. See further below.

devotion of Israel's God.⁴⁰ In this particular context, this relationship to Jesus appears to be motivated by that Jesus shares the very glory of his Father (8:38).⁴¹ The reason why Jesus can be the object of ultimate devotion is, thus, his intimate association with the one God of Israel.⁴²

9.3. *The Eternal Destiny Determined by the Relationship to Jesus*

Closely related to the question of martyrdom is the destiny of a human being in the afterlife. In my brief discussion of Jesus' role as judge in Mark in the previous chapter, I observed that only one passage (8:38) envisages Jesus as judge in a court scene.⁴³ I also noted that this attribution was not unique, but that more than one eschatological figure was expected to serve as God's agent in carrying out judgment. Where Mark's description of Jesus as judge, however, seems to go beyond anything else is that the sole criterion of judgment is people's relation to *Jesus*:⁴⁴

For whoever is ashamed [ἐπαισχυνθῇ]⁴⁵ of *me* and of *my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also

⁴⁰ So rightly, Horstmann, *Studien*, 46, who also concludes: "Das bedeutet nichts anderes, als dass er für sich göttliche Autorität beansprucht."

⁴¹ See 8.3.

⁴² Cf. Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 76: "Der von Jesus verlangte absolute Gehorsam gilt dem von ihm ausgelegten endzeitlichen Willen Gottes und damit eingeschlossen ihm selbst. Die Treue zu Gott schliesst die Gemeinschaft mit Jesus ein."

⁴³ See 8.4, n. 80; on Jesus as judge rather than witness in this passage, see also Horstmann, *Studien*, 47. Although not directly depicting Jesus as judge, both 10:23 and 12:34 show how he decides the destiny of people. On the latter, note the irony; the scribe is authorized to pass judgment on the Torah, but Jesus' authority is higher. Cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 284. Note also how acceptance of Jesus' teaching on the law is not enough to be in the kingdom of God. For Mark, one must accept Jesus himself. Cf. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4: *Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 497-98.

⁴⁴ See esp. S. H. Travis, *Christ and the Judgement of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought* (2d rev. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 220: "... the criterion of judgement is whether people have affirmed their relationship to Jesus, and the outcome of the judgement is a decisive acceptance or rejection by the Son of Man." Cf. also Horstmann, *Studien*, 46; W. G. Kümmel, "Das Verhalten Jesus gegenüber und das Verhalten des Menschensohns: Markus 8,38 par und Lukas 12,3f par Mattäus 10,32f," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn* (FS. A. Vögtle; ed. R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1975), 210-24, esp. 220-24; Pesch, *Markus*, 2:64; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:215; M. Casey, *The Solution to the "Son of man" Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 193. In comparison to the Matthean parallel (16:27), it is striking that Mark lacks any reference to judgment according to deeds.

⁴⁵ A. Horstmann, "ἀίσχύνομαι," *EDNT* 1:42-43, notes that the verb "plays a special role in the confessional language of primitive Christianity. It can designate the renunciation of Jesus Christ by a human being or the renunciation of the human being by Christ. As a fixed negated formula of Rom 1:16 it replaces ὁμολογέω. To confess the Gospel means not to be put to shame before God and humankind and therefore to have no need to be ashamed of this gospel, no matter how offensive its form and consequence." The parallel passages in Matt 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9 use the verbs ὁμολογέω and ἀρνέομαι, but the basic meaning is the same. On the serious offence of denying God

be ashamed [ἐπαισχυνθήσεται] when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

This statement is closely linked to the preceding verses which, likewise, make a human being's eternal destiny dependant on his or her relation to Jesus (8:34-37). Elsewhere, eternal life is given to those who give up everything for the sake of Jesus and follow him (10:29-30) and to those who endure during persecutions (13:13).⁴⁶

The sole focus on the relation to Jesus is, again, noteworthy in a Jewish context. The OT can in a variety of ways speak of a relationship between Israel and God, which, when broken by the people, leads to judgment. This is often expressed in terms of *forsaking* God whether by ignoring the voice of God and his commandments or going after other gods,⁴⁷ or, when the common metaphor of a marriage between God and his people is used, as adultery.⁴⁸ Sometimes this also comes to expression in the relationship between God and an individual as, for example, when God reproaches Eli for not having honoured him (1 Sam 2:30).⁴⁹ A similar pattern can be detected in the early Jewish literature.⁵⁰ Travis notes in his survey of these texts that "[t]he righteous are those whose basic loyalty to God and his covenant is not in question, and who will therefore be acceptable to him at the final judgement."⁵¹ Loyalty to an agent of God seems, with one exception, never to be the criterion of the outcome in those texts where a messianic figure functions as judge.⁵² The exception is the Chosen One in the *Similitudes of Enoch*. In *1 En.* 48:10 people are condemned because "they have denied the Lord of the Spirits *and* his

in Judaism, see S. Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 187.

⁴⁶ For an overview of the standards of judgment in Mark, see D. Rhoads, "Losing Life for Others in the Face of Death: Mark's Standards of Judgment," in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical and Social-Scientific Approaches* (ed. J. D. Kingsbury; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1997), 83-94, but he strangely misses the importance of the relationship to Jesus in this regard. On this, see Travis, *Judgement*, 217-61. Travis discusses the three Synoptic Gospels together, and gives most attention to Matthew and Luke, but concludes that Mark shares the basic pattern (258).

⁴⁷ E.g., Num 32:15; 1 Sam 8:7-8; 2 Chr 12:5; 15:2; 24:20; Isa 1:4; Jer 2:5, 19; 7:28-29; 16:10-11; Hos 4:10-17; Zech 7:13-14. Cf. also 1 Kgs 8:33, 35; Isa 59:13.

⁴⁸ E.g., Isa 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; 3:1-14; 31:32; Ezek 16; 23:4-5; Hos 2:1-3:1; implicitly in e.g., Isa 1:21; 50:1; Jer 2:20, 32; Hos 4:15. Cf. also Deut 32:21; Ps 78:56-66; Hos 1:9. On this metaphor, see e.g. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Baker; London: SCM, 1961), 250-58.

⁴⁹ Cf. 1 Sam 15:11-26.

⁵⁰ Cf. e.g., Sir 2:15-18; 5:4-7; 41:8; Bar 3:8; *Jub.* 23:31; *Pss. Sol.* 2:33-36; 14:6-9; 15:13. See further the survey in Travis, *Judgement*, 26-49.

⁵¹ Travis, *Judgement*, 29.

⁵² Cf. 11QM^{elch} 2:12-13; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21-46; *T. Abr.* 12; 13:1-8; *1 En.* 45:2-3; 62:11; *4 Ezra* 12:31-34; 13:37-38; *2 Bar.* 40:1; 72:2.

Messiah”⁵³ and in 46:5 judgment is a result of failure to glorify and obey the Son of Man, but other reasons are added subsequently, including the failure to glorify the name of the Lord of the Spirits, deeds of oppression, and idolatry (46:6-7). Loyalty to *both* God and his chosen agent appears to be one of the criteria for judgment in the *Similitudes*.

The fact that the relation to Jesus is the sole criterion for the outcome in judgment in Mark suggests, again, that Jesus stands in for God. This interpretation also gains some support from the reference Jesus makes to the “adulterous and sinful generation” in 8:38.⁵⁴ The accusation of “adultery” was, as we noted, often directed against the people of God when they had forsaken God by turning to other gods. In the present context, however, the relationship to Jesus is in view. Denial and rejection of Jesus is placed on an equal footing with “adultery.” In this light, then, it is perhaps not so surprising that Mark uses precisely that metaphor for Jesus, which in the OT is used for YHWH to describe his “marriage” relationship to his people, namely “bridegroom” (2:18-20).⁵⁵ The application of this metaphor to Jesus probably implies, as Collins notes, “that the presence of Jesus is equivalent to the presence of God,”⁵⁶ but it also supports the view that Jesus fills the role of YHWH in his relationship to human beings. It is for this reason that Jesus can require the kind of public allegiance God normally requires⁵⁷ and the reason why one’s relationship to Jesus is the criterion of judgment.

9.4. The Necessity of Following of Jesus

Throughout Mark the necessity of following Jesus is emphasized. Jesus begins his ministry by calling his first disciples (1:16-20) and the Gospel ends with an invitation to follow after Jesus to Galilee (16:7). In his teaching on the subject Jesus stresses that allegiance to him takes priority over all other relations:

Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, *for my sake and for the*

⁵³ Translation *OTP* 1:36.

⁵⁴ Cf. Isa 1:4, 21; Jer 3:3; Ezek 16:32; Hos 2:4. Cf. e.g., Lane, *Mark*, 310; E. Lövestam, *Jesus and this ‘Generation’: A New Testament Study* (ConBNT 25; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 36; Collins, *Mark*, 411.

⁵⁵ On this, see further 10.3.1.

⁵⁶ Collins, *Mark*, 199. Cf. Cranfield, *Mark* 110; Gärtner, *Markus*, 93; Gundry, *Mark*, 136; France, *Mark*, 139; Moloney, *Mark*, 66-7.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gundry, *Use*, 209.

gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (10:29-30)

These words appear at the end of the passage which begins with a young man coming to Jesus asking him what to do to inherit eternal life (10:17). The whole pericope centers on the young man's question, which is indicated not only by the fact that the passage is bracketed by the expression ζῶν ἁἰώνιον (10:17, 30), but also by the repetition of phrases like "enter the kingdom of God," (10:23-25; three times); "have treasure in heaven," (10:21) "be saved" (10:26)⁵⁸ and culminates with the words just cited. What is, then, the answer to the question?

To begin with, Jesus questions why the man is addressing him, "good teacher": "Why do you call me good?" and, echoing the words of the scribes in 2:7, he continues, "No one is good but one, God."⁵⁹ Jesus then goes on to refer the man to the commandments, "You know the commandments..." This transition has led some scholars to conclude that Jesus distances himself from God⁶⁰ and that he can only respond to the question by pointing to God's commandment.⁶¹ This would probably be correct if we were to isolate 10:17-19 from the context, but in the present context quite the opposite is true. Mark describes how Jesus both discerns the secrets of the man's heart and then *himself* goes on to define what is necessary to inherit eternal life: "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (10:21). It is not sufficient to keep the commandments to inherit eternal life, as the man claims he has done; he must give up everything he owns and *follow Jesus*. Consequently, Jesus does not only himself

⁵⁸ The pericope is usually divided into three parts: 10:17-22; 23-27; 28-31.

⁵⁹ Exactly the same phrase is used in both passages: εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός. The phrase probably alludes to the *Shema*. Cf. Pesch, Markus, 2:138-39; Marcus, *Mark*, 721, 726.

⁶⁰ E.g., D. M. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 107; M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 70; J.-J. Marin, *The Christology of Mark: Does Mark's Christology Support the Chalcedonian Formula "Truly Man and Truly God"?* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991), 99-100.

⁶¹ Cf. K. Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament* (WMANT 40; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1972), 400-401: "Nach Mk 10,18 ist nach Jesu Wort nicht er selbst der Gute, der Gebote geben könnte, sondern allein Gott, der, so darf man aus dem traditionellen Hintergrund dieser Argumentation ergänzen, sein eigenes Gutsein durch deren Befolgung nachgeahmt wissen will. So ist für Jesus die Ablehnung des Titels 'gut' ein mittel, darauf hinzuweisen, dass nicht seine eigenen, sondern nur Gottes Gebote zu erfüllen sind." And further: "Gott allein konnte die Gebote aufstellen, er allein ist gut." Similarly, Pesch, *Markus*, 2:138.

define what is required for entrance into the kingdom of God; at the climax of his declaration he binds it to himself!⁶²

Jesus' demand on the young man is not only about money. It is, of course, not a matter of giving away what he had made through successful investments on the stock market, but of the family estate, which "is of supreme value in the Middle East society."⁶³ Naboth refused to exchange his own vineyard for a better one since he could not give up the inheritance of his forefathers (1 Kgs 21:3). In other words, it is not just about property but also about family. Jesus' demand, then, also stands in sharp contrast to the command about honouring one's parents, which he just cited (10:19). The young man's loyalty to Jesus must be higher than loyalty to family estate and the family from which he inherited it. The kind of demand that is placed on the man is, as Bailey points out, similar to what Abraham faced when God called him away from his home and family in Ur (Gen 12:1). Thus, whether or not the words "with all your strength" of the *Shema* already were interpreted as willingness to give up one's whole property for the sake of God,⁶⁴ the young man fails precisely

⁶² Though with slightly different approaches, K. E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 163; Gundry, *Mark*, 553; Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 74; Marcus, *Mark*, 726, conclude that Jesus here ends up placing himself on the divine side of the divine/human dichotomy. Mark's point is not that Jesus is not good. Jesus does, in fact, not say so. The Evangelist affirms Jesus' goodness and mercy towards people throughout the Gospel (esp. 7:37), which in this particular passage is demonstrated by his "love" to the man (10:21) and his teaching of the man the way to eternal life (the connection between God's love of Israel and his giving of the Law is attested in Philo, *Decalogue* 176 [Pesch, *Markus*, 2:139] and in the second benediction of the *Shema* [see Marcus, *Mark*, 726]). Then, with the words of Gathercole, "[i]f God alone is good and able to give commandments, then Jesus does as well. By implication, then, he is also good. And he is good not in the sense implied by the rich man, but in the absolute, divine sense as used by Jesus himself." This is probably a case of Markan irony, where the man speaks much better than he himself is aware of. Another good example is found in the mockery of Jesus as one who "saved others, but cannot save himself" (15:31). The question Jesus asks is probably also directed to the audience in much the same way as the disciples' bewildered question in 4:41. They are expected to answer who Jesus is. The frequently made assertion that Matthew saw Mark 10:18 as christologically problematic and, for that reason, corrected it (Matt 19:16-17) is, in my view, misleading, for Matthew retains the most problematic part, that *only one* is good. If Jesus is distanced from God in Mark, he is no closer in Matthew. Indeed, in Matthew's version it is Jesus who himself brings up the question of *who* is good as he is not addressed so by the man. Matthew's different formulation has in my view more to do with his concern for the law than christology. The man is asking about what *good* deed he shall *do* and Jesus here (in difference from Mark) stresses the importance of keeping the commandments in order to inherit eternal life and that the man can become *perfect* by selling all and following Jesus.

⁶³ Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 164.

⁶⁴ Sirach seems to give some evidence for the interpretation by connecting the phrase "with all your strength" to willingness to place one's property at the priests' disposal (Sir 7:30-31).

when it comes to the greatest commandment (12:29-30):⁶⁵ he loves his property more than God.⁶⁶

Not so the disciples, however. When Jesus points out that salvation is a miracle, Peter remarks, “See, we have left everything [ἀφῆκαμεν πάντα] and followed you” (10:28). The parallelism between Jesus’ requirement, “Go, sell all that you have... Come and follow me” and Peter’s words is obvious. The miracle Jesus talks of has happened to them. Peter’s words, of course, points back to the beginning of the Gospel where Jesus at three occasions utters his “follow me” and without hesitation Peter and Andrew, the Zebedees (1:16-20) and Levi (2:13-14) immediately leave everything behind and follow Jesus.⁶⁷ That Peter’s “everything” involves both property and family relationships is clear from Jesus’ response, cited at the beginning of this section. What was implicit in Jesus’ request to the young man is, thereby, made explicit. Jesus demands a higher loyalty to himself than to the extended family. The reference to leaving fathers and mothers is especially noteworthy, since it is in tension with both the commandment to honour father and mother, which meant “to stay home and take care of them until they die,”⁶⁸ and Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees that they give to God what they owe to their parents (7:10-13). In any case, only God and his Law were worthy of a higher loyalty than the family. God’s requirement of Abraham in this regard is well-known (Gen 22:1-12). The Torah stipulates that anyone, even a family member, who entices people to give up their faithfulness to God and go after other gods should be killed (Deut 13:1-9) and Deut 33:9 describes Levi as one who rejected his father, mother, children for the sake of God. The martyrdom stories, likewise, testify to this fact (cf. 2 Macc 7:20-23; 4

⁶⁵ Note the allusion to the *Shema* in Jesus’ response in 10:18.

⁶⁶ Cf. Schweizer, *Mark*, 211: “When the man says yes or no to Jesus, he is saying yes or no to God.”

⁶⁷ One gets the sense that the same kind of powerful, creative and divine word is at play in these cases as when Jesus performs healing and nature miracles (cf. Schweizer, *Mark*, 48, who refers to Ps 33:9; Isa 55:10-11; Mark 1:17 may echo Jer 16:16). Thus, when Jesus states that “all things are possible with God” (probably an allusion to LXX Gen 18:4; see Gundry, *Use*, 38-39; for the biblical and extrabiblical background of the concept, see W. C. van Unnik, “‘Alles ist dir möglich’ (Mk 14,36),” in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für G. Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag* [ed. O. Böcher and K. Haacker; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970], 27-36) it is not at his own exclusion, as Marin asserts (*Christology*, 99-100). Mark’s narrative depicts Jesus as participating in God’s making possible of the impossible. For this conclusion in regard to the use of the similar expression in 9:23, see O. Hofius, “Die Allmacht des Sohnes Gottes und das Gebet des Glaubens: Erwägungen zu Thema und Aussage der Wundererzählung Mk 9,14-29,” *ZTK* 101 (2004): 117-137. That the rich young man does not follow Jesus does not demonstrate Jesus’ inability in this regard more than it demonstrates God’s failure. On Jesus as the one who elects, see Mark 13:27.

⁶⁸ Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 169.

Macc. 2:10-12; 13:23-14:1; 15:1, 8, 14, 24, 29-31).⁶⁹ The Jewish devotion to their God in this regard was, as Marcus points out, also noticed by outsiders.⁷⁰ Tacitus says that converts to Judaism were taught “to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account.”⁷¹

The point of the passage is clear. Loyalty to Jesus must surpass loyalty to family and property; only by following him is salvation and entrance into the kingdom of God possible. With regard to the person of Jesus this means that he occupies a place normally reserved for God alone. Or to put it the other way around: only in the giving of unreserved devotion to Jesus is the demand of the *Shema* to love God fulfilled.⁷² But this also means that the “following” of Jesus takes on a much deeper meaning than the physical wandering with Jesus, a meaning which most clearly comes to expression in the choice Elijah puts before the people: “If YHWH is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kgs 18:21).⁷³

9.5. Acting in the Name of Jesus

In my discussion of Jesus’ teaching above,⁷⁴ I observed that Jesus does not make any utterances in the name of God. Instead, he seemingly speaks in his own authority. Equally remarkable is the fact that the disciples do not speak or act in God’s name,

⁶⁹ Cf. also 4Q175 14-17; *T. Job* 4:1-11; *T. Jud.* 25:4.

⁷⁰ Marcus, *Mark*, 739.

⁷¹ *Hist.* 5.5 (trans. Moore, LCL). Of course, it could be the other way around, too, namely that the converts were despised by their family; cf. *Jos. Asen.* 12:12-15; *Mark* 13:12.

⁷² Cf. the conclusion by Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 170: “Jesus is God’s unique agent through whom obedience to God is to be expressed.” Best, *Following*, 115, puts up a false dichotomy when he states that “for Mark discipleship (‘following’) is not related to the Law but the person of Jesus.” The point is precisely this that the greatest commandment is fulfilled by following Jesus.

⁷³ On the following of God or other gods, see e.g., *Deut* 1:36; 4:3; 13:4; *Judg* 2:12; 1 Kgs 14:8; 18:18; 2 Kgs 23:3; *Isa* 59:3; *Jer* 2:5; *Ezek* 20:16; *Hos* 11:10; *Pr Azar* 18-19; cf. also *Prov* 7:22. See Schweizer, *Mark*, 49 (followed by e.g., R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1972], 132), who notes that a rabbi neither calls a disciple, nor claims that being with him is more important than the commandments. Cf. also Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 433-35. M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), in his discussion of the historical Jesus makes the same observation, while arguing that Jesus’ call of followers only can be compared to God’s call of prophets (16-18, 71-73). He notes Elijah’s call of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21), but argues that the ultimate call came from God (1 Kgs 19:15-18). It should be noted that Hengel claims that the call to abandon everything only was directed to specific individuals and not directed to all (61-63). Only on a secondary level in the Gospels is “following after” understood as a general term for discipleship and a duty for all in the Christian community (cf. Best, *Following*, 113).

⁷⁴ See 7.3.5.

but in the name of *Jesus*.⁷⁵ In the OT,⁷⁶ one speaks (Exod 5:23; Deut 18:19; 1 Kgs 22:16), prophesies (Jer 11:21; 14:14; 20:9; 26:9), comes (1 Sam 17:45), conquers (Pss 44:6; 118:10-12), blesses (Deut 10:8; 21:5; Pss 118:26; 129:8), or curses in the name of God (2 Kgs 2:24).⁷⁷ In Mark, however, there are no actions in the name of God, apart from Jesus' own coming in the name of the Lord (11:9 citing Ps 118:26). Instead, the disciples are exhorted by Jesus to receive children in his name (9:37). Exorcisms and mighty works (δύναμις)⁷⁸ are taking place in his name (9:38-39).⁷⁹ In the context these references refer to acts of people who are not followers of Jesus, but it is obvious from the same context that they are imitations of the activities of the disciples (cf. 6:7, 30). After Jesus had commissioned the twelve and given them authority to cast out demons (3:14-15), they probably did so in the name of him who had given them this authority. This usage can then be contrasted, on the one hand, with Jesus' own exorcisms without reference to anyone and, on the other hand, with the attempt by the Gerasene demoniac to overcome Jesus in the power of God (5:7). In addition to these references we also note Jesus' warning of those who falsely will come in his name (13:6) and his prediction of suffering on account of his name (13:13). Jesus' name is, in other words, treated in much the same way God's name is treated in Judaism and the disciples act primarily in relation to Jesus.⁸⁰

This use of Jesus' name could for those who did not share the Christian faith in Jesus have resembled the magical use of the name of deities and other divine

⁷⁵ On the christological significance of this widespread phenomenon in the NT (cf. e.g., Acts 2:38; 3:6; 4:10, 30; 8:16; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 6:11; Jas 5:14, see esp. L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 108-11. Cf. also H. Bietenhard "ὄνομα, κτλ," *TDNT* 5:242-82; L. Hartman, "ὄνομα," *EDNT* 2:519-22. For a survey of earlier scholarship on the topic and a full overview of the references to the name of Jesus in the NT, see A. Ruck-Schröder, *Der Name Gottes und der Name Jesu: Eine neutestamentliche Studie* (WMANT 80; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999).

⁷⁶ For the use of God's name in the OT, see Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5: 255-61; cf. also F. V. Reiterer "יְהוָה," *TDOT* 15:128-75.

⁷⁷ Cf. also the various references to God's name in *1 En.* 45:1; 46:6-7; 48:6, 7; 61:9-12; 63:7. Contrary to the claim by Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 80, the righteous are not saved in the name of the Chosen One in 48:7. See M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 211.

⁷⁸ On the use of this term for Jesus' miracles, see Mark 6:2.

⁷⁹ Hurtado notes that this passage gives evidence that Jesus' name was treated "as efficacious in exorcisms and healings" (*Lord Jesus Christ*, 391).

⁸⁰ Ruck-Schröder's conclusion with regard to the NT as a whole applies to Mark as well: "In diesem doppelten Bezug des Namensbegriffs, auf Gott und auf Jesus, liegt das Spezifische des Neuen Testaments gegenüber dem alttestamentlichen und dem jüdischen Verständnis des Namens Gottes" (*Name*, 260-61; her italics).

figures in exorcisms, healings, and curses, which was common the Ancient world⁸¹ and given the impression that they were “walking” in the name of another god than YHWH (cf. Micah 4:5). It may then very well be, as Hurtado suggests, that the reference to suffering on account of Jesus’ name reflects “the outraged response of those outside the Christian circles to their astonishing readiness to treat Jesus’ name as worthy of such devotion.”⁸²

However, as I noted in my discussion of 13:13 above, it is also possible to take the formula “in my name” as an objective genitive, that is, a reference to the name which belongs to Jesus, namely the divine name YHWH. According to this interpretation, it is not the name “Jesus” as such which is treated in the same way as God’s name. Instead, the Jewish tradition of acting in the name, that is YHWH, is continued, but this is done with reference to Jesus. Two passages, in particular, could be interpreted this way, 9:37 and 13:6.

The ultimate motivation for receiving children in the name of Jesus is that those who do so receive God: “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me” (9:37). The statement, which has a Johannine ring, assumes that the presence of Jesus is also the presence of God.⁸³ The explanation for this association of Jesus with the Father may not only be the idea that the representative of a man is as the man himself,⁸⁴ but that the presence of God’s name in Jesus guarantees that God himself is present, just as God was present in the temple through his name.⁸⁵ What is the significance of receiving a child in this name, then? In the present context a reference to the receiving of children in the Christian community seems more likely⁸⁶ than that Christian care for orphaned or abandoned children is in view,⁸⁷ though these alternatives are not mutually exclusive. This also means that a reference to baptism

⁸¹ Cf. Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5:250-52.

⁸² Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 391.

⁸³ On the “high” Christology of this passage, cf. Marcus, *Mark*, 683; France, *Mark*, 375.

⁸⁴ Taylor, *Mark*, 405, with reference to Str-B 1:590; 2:167.

⁸⁵ On God’s presence by means of his name, see Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5:256-58.

⁸⁶ All the sayings in 9:37-42 seem to be related to the welcoming of outsiders into the Christian community (cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 510). On the link between verses 37 and 42, see C. D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark’s Narrative* (SNTSMS 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 156-57.

⁸⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 445-46; Marcus, *Mark*, 683.

cannot be excluded⁸⁸ and that the receiving of children in the name of Jesus could refer to the use of the divine name in baptism.⁸⁹ This would give a satisfactory explanation as to how both Jesus and God can be received in the child; when the divine name is given to the child in baptism both Jesus and God become present through the dwelling of the divine name, which Jesus shares with God.⁹⁰

The meaning of Jesus' words in 13:6, "Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am' [πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι] and they will lead many astray," is difficult to determine and has led to numerous interpretations.⁹¹ Not only is it difficult to make sense of the first and second part of the verse on their own, but the meaning attributed to one part cannot be divorced from the meaning of the other. The first part, "Many will come in my name" has a close parallel in the biblical literature where prophets speak in the name of YHWH⁹² and may be a reference to false prophets who speak in the name of Jesus.⁹³ But what

⁸⁸ Some scholars have seen a reference to baptism in the other passage about children in Mark (10:13-16; on the link between these two passage, cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 2:105-06), which may be a reflection of a debate about the baptism of children in the early Church. See J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: SCM, 1960), 48-55; O. Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1950), 25-26, 76-79; for a critical assessment, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 320-28; for a recent discussion which is open to the possibility of a baptism reference, see Marcus, *Mark*, 716-17.

⁸⁹ On the use of the divine name in Baptism in early Christianity, see Gieschen, "Name," 144-46; idem, "The Divine Name in Holy Baptism," in *All Theology is Christology: Essays in Honor of D. P. Scaer* (ed. D. O. Wenthe et al.; Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2000), 67-77; cf. esp. Matt 28:19; James 2:7; Justin, *1 Apol.* 61. But see L. Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), for the view that Christians were baptized into the name "Jesus."

⁹⁰ Though not connecting it to the act of Baptism, Stein, *Mark*, 444, connects the receiving of Jesus through the child with the fact that the child is baptized in his name.

⁹¹ See surveys in V. Howard, *Das Ego Jesu in den synoptischen Evangelien* (Marburg: Elwert, 1975), 116-23; C. H. Williams, *I am He: The Interpretation of 'Ani Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 2:113; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000), 229-41. Four major alternatives can be discerned: 1) Jewish claimants to messiahship (Williams, *I am He*, 229-41; France, *Mark*, 510-11; Collins, *Mark*, 603-05); 2) Christians who claim to be the returning Christ (Taylor, *Mark*, 504; W. H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], 115; Pesch, *Markus*, 2:279; Marcus, *Mark*, 875); 3) A warning against Christian prophets who speak in the name of Jesus, using the revelation-formula "I am" (M. E. Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Know, 1991], 158-61); 4) Individuals who are making blasphemous claims by calling themselves by God's name ἐγὼ εἰμι (Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 270-71; H. Zimmermann, "Das absolute 'Ich bin' in der Redeweise Jesu," *TTZ* 69 [1960]: 1-20; L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.* [Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1966], 159-61; J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* [WUNT 36; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1985], 68, 127-28, 244).

⁹² Passages are listed in Collins, *Mark*, 603 n. 87.

⁹³ Lane (*Mark*, 456) notes the Latin manuscripts k which adds "false prophets" here.

about their proclamation ἐγὼ εἰμι? These words appear, as already noted, without a predicative nominative at two other places in Mark (6:50; 14:62), both times uttered by Jesus himself. In the light of these passages, the obvious point is that Jesus may rightfully say these words, while those who imitate him are deceivers and may not. In 6:50, where Jesus is walking on the sea, there is a strong opinion among exegetes that they allude to the divine “I am” in the OT.⁹⁴ This connotation is less obvious in 14:62, where the words give an affirmative answer to the high priest’s question. Nevertheless, in connection with the other exalted claims Jesus makes there, which a reader probably also would connect with other descriptions of Jesus’ coming (8:38; 13:24-27), and the blasphemy accusation, it is possible that Jesus’ ἐγὼ εἰμι alludes to YHWH’s self-declaration and affirms his divine status.⁹⁵ Overall usage in Mark thus favours a similar understanding of ἐγὼ εἰμι in 13:6, and even if one is not convinced in the case of 14:62 it is at least possible that readers may be guided by Jesus’ previous “I am” when encountering the enigmatic words in 13:6. But, is there anything in the context which would suggest this interpretation of ἐγὼ εἰμι?⁹⁶

The first thing to note is that 13:5-8 depict a typical apocalyptic scenario which includes wars, earthquakes, and famines.⁹⁷ Typical is also the motif of leading astray,⁹⁸ often associated with an individual adversary of God’s people who presents himself as divine.⁹⁹ In this context, it would seem fitting to understand ἐγὼ εἰμι as a false claim to divinity; there is at least nothing in the immediate context which would speak against it.¹⁰⁰ Second, without specifying the meaning of the phrase, “many will come in my name,” there is unquestionably a connection to Jesus himself, and probably also to his coming, described later in the speech (13:24-27). Those who will come to deceive many with their false claims may here be contrasted with the

⁹⁴ See 6.4.

⁹⁵ Cf. Hurtado, *Mark*, 254. Mark’s unique rendering of Jesus’ response (cf. Matt 26:64; Luke 22:67-70) may, as Hurtado suggests, be designed to make precisely this point.

⁹⁶ Cf. the objection raised by Williams that ἐγὼ εἰμι lacks precisely that context in 13:6 which gives it divine connotations in 6:50 (*I am He*, 233-34).

⁹⁷ E.g., Rev 6:1-8; 4 *Ezra* 6:22-24; 13:30-32; 2 *Bar.* 27:7; 70:8; *Sib. Or.* 3:635; for a survey of the motifs, see Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 28-34. Against e.g., Marcus, *Mark*, 880, this seems to refer to a variety of conflicts in various places and not specifically to the Jewish-Roman war; see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 394-98.

⁹⁸ E.g., 2 Thess 2:11; Rev 13:14; 1 *En.* 56:4; *Sib. Or.* 3:68-70; *Asc. Isa.* 4:6-7.

⁹⁹ 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5-6; *Did.* 16:4; *Sib. Or.* 5:33-34; *Asc. Isa.* 4:6-7.

¹⁰⁰ Surprisingly, for Collins, the main argument against the divine interpretation of ἐγὼ εἰμι is that it does not fit what follows in 13:7-8 (*Mark*, 603).

coming of the Son of Man, felt by the whole universe and seen by all. This coming has, as we saw, strong signs of a theophany and Jesus is acting in several divine roles. If a contrast is intended in this regard,¹⁰¹ then ἐγὼ εἰμι could serve to highlight their pretensions to divinity.¹⁰²

But how are we to understand the first part of the statement if “I am” is taken in this meaning? I suggest that an objective genitive would make better sense than a subjective genitive, i.e., that ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου refers to the divine name rather than the name “Jesus.” This means then that these claims are not made with specific reference to the person of Jesus, but rather to God. Like Babylon (Isa 47:8) these figures claim a position and an honour which is reserved for God alone.¹⁰³ In Mark’s view, however, Jesus alone is worthy to share this honour and position with God. It is *his* name.

To sum up, whether these references to the name of Jesus are taken to refer to the name Jesus or the divine name YHWH, they testify to Jesus’ unique association with God. In the former case the name Jesus is used in much the same way as God’s name in the OT. In the latter case Jesus shares the very name of God with God.

9.6. Conclusion

We conclude that the way followers of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark relate or are expected to relate to Jesus attributes to him a position which is due to God alone. Their relation to Jesus, expressed in the abandoning of all other relationships for the sake of following of him, in the deepest, most profound acts of love to endure persecution and death for his sake, in the use of his name, seems to have its only analogy in the relation between God and his people in the Jewish tradition. It is obviously so that the greatest commandment of undivided love to God only can be

¹⁰¹ The theme of *coming* forms an *inclusio* in Mark 13 (13:6, 35; or 26 if we exclude the final parables) and may be the reason why the coming of deceivers is mentioned as the first sign.

¹⁰² Cf. Kelber, *Kingdom*, 115: “Those who use the formula of theophany [ἐγὼ εἰμι] assert the identity of the very one in whose name they come.” Against this interpretation it has been objected that we lack evidence in the Jewish or early Christian apocalyptic tradition that the adversary would claim divinity by use of the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula. There may be a close parallel in *Asc. Isa.* 4:6-7: “He [Belial] will act and speak like the Beloved, and will say, ‘I am the Lord, and before me there was no one.’ And all men in the world will believe him” (*OTP* 2:161-62), but a predicative nominative, “the Lord,” is added to the “I am” statement. The ἐγὼ εἰμι formula is, however, found in Isaiah, where Babylon is imitating God: ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἕτερον (Isa 47:8, 10; cf. Zeph 2:15). Given Mark’s use of Isaiah, it cannot be excluded that this passage is in view.

¹⁰³ Mark’s audience may have thought of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or recent figures, such as Simon Magus (see Fossum, *Name*, 128-29) or the Roman Emperors Caligula and Nero.

fulfilled by uttermost devotion to Jesus.¹⁰⁴ This view of Jesus suggests the closest possible linking of him to God. But it is also the other way around, without Jesus in some mysterious way being the presence of God himself such devotion would seem to be excluded. Only the one who is united with God on the other side of creator-humanity divide can possibly be the object for the kind of loyalty and devotion which Jesus is.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Marcus, Mark 2:842: "To love 'the Lord our God' with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, then, is at the same time to love and follow Jesus [...] Mark thus foreshadows a daring Christian reinterpretation of the Jewish idea of divine oneness, a reinterpretation that implies a unity between God and Jesus." Cf. also N. A. Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 159: "New Testament authors integrate, in several ways, exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ with universal monotheism." Dahl refers primarily to 1 Cor 8:6, but his observation is valid with regard to the pattern we have found in Mark.

10. Other Evidence of Jesus Acting in Divine Roles

10.1. Introduction

Evidence for Jesus' close linking to YHWH is by no means limited to the passages discussed above. This chapter includes brief discussions of further evidence. Given the limits of this thesis it is not possible to provide more than a brief outline of the argumentation, but sufficient enough to indicate that these aspects of Mark's portrayal of Jesus can be aligned with the other evidence and contribute to a fuller picture of Jesus' divine identity and close association with the one God of Israel.

10.2. The Healing Miracles of Jesus

During the first half of the 20th century biblical scholars commonly viewed Jesus' miracles as evidence that Jesus was ascribed an exalted status in early Christianity. Whether they were regarded as manifestations of the divine nature of a *theios anēr* or, in more general terms, as pointing to a supernatural status of the performer, the miracles, it was argued, proved Jesus' divine origin.¹ But this view has not gone uncontested. Sanders has recently challenged it.² According to him, ancient people would see miracles "as striking and significant" but *not* as indicating a divine status of the miracle worker.

Sanders is no doubt correct in one respect. Miracles do not by themselves necessarily prove a supernatural status. Several biblical figures were associated with miracles without ever being thought of as more than human.³ But Sanders goes to the other extreme when he denies any relation between miracle working and a superhuman status. We only need to go to the Book of Acts to find evidence that people of the Greco-Roman era saw miracle workers as earthly manifestations of the gods (Acts 14:11-13; 28:4-6). Miracles may or may not have been seen as proof for

¹ Cf. e.g., M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. B. L. Woolf; London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935), 96-97; Rawlinson, *Mark*, 1-1ii; T. A. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 41.

² E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 132-68. To be fair, Sanders is primarily concerned with the historical Jesus, but nowhere does he indicate that early readers of the Gospels would have seen the miracles as pointing to an exalted status for Jesus.

³ One may here only contrast the OT parallels Pesch proposes in his commentary on Mark with parallels highlighted by advocates of a *theios anēr* hypothesis.

divinity. I shall here indicate some features of Mark's healing miracles which point to a divine role for Jesus and a close linking to YHWH.

10.2.1. Jesus as "Bearer of Numinous Power"

In several of the examinations above which involved miracles, I noted differences between Jesus' action and that of other figures in Jewish and Hellenistic parallels. For example, while Jesus is portrayed as subduing a storm by his own word, a similar Jewish story portrays a Jewish boy calling upon God and another, Hellenistic story, has a certain Orpheus pray to the Dioscuri. Jesus performs the miracle himself; the other two implore a deity/ies to act.⁴

In his structural analysis of Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian healing miracles, Kahl rightly criticizes many previous comparative studies for having overlooked this dimension and applied the designation "miracle worker" to a wide range of figures regardless of their function in the miracle story.⁵ To rectify this, Kahl proposes a new terminology which takes into account the actual role of the "miracle worker." He proposes to divide them into bearers, petitioners, and mediators of numinous power:

Because of this diversity I will refrain from using the term "miracle worker" in my analysis, and introduce instead the terms "bearer of numinous power" (BNP) for subjects who *incorporate* healing power in themselves, "petitioner of numinous power" (PNP) for those whose function is to activate their gods through prayer, and "mediator of numinous power" (MNP) for those subjects who mediate a BNP's numinous power for the performance of a miracle.⁶

In the case of the storm stilling accounts, Jesus functions as BNP, whereas the Jewish lad and Orpheus would be termed PNPs. BNPs in the latter cases are YHWH and the Dioscuri. Moses, on the other hand, acts as an MNP when he smites the Red Sea or the rock with his rod.

The result of Kahl's study is significant. He concludes that the portrayal of Jesus as an *immanent* BNP to whom several miracles are attributed is unique for its

⁴ See 4.3 and 4.4.

⁵ W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting: A Religionsgeschichtlich Comparison from a Structural Perspective* (FRLANT 163; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

⁶ Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 76.

time.⁷ The only real parallel to Jesus is Apollonius of Tyana, but his *Vita* was written about 150 years after the composition of the Gospels.⁸ Contemporaries of Jesus, whether Hanina ben Dosa, Vespasian, or the Christian apostles, are either portrayed as PNP or MNP, but never as BNP. Furthermore YHWH alone is the BNP in the OT and other Jewish literature.⁹ This means that Jesus belongs to the same category of miracle workers as the God of Israel, Asclepios, Sarapis, Jupiter, and Apollonius of Tyana, who all, except Apollonius, are transcendent gods. Mark's portrayal of Jesus' healing miracles then puts Jesus in the role of Israel's God, as well as the divine beings of the Greco-Roman world. Kahl concludes that "[t]he Markan Jesus, in a Greco-Roman environment, must inevitably have been interpreted as the incorporation of a god."¹⁰

10.2.2. The Disciples as "Miracle Workers"

Related to the aforementioned observation is also how Mark portrays the relationship between Jesus and the disciples with regard to miracle working. The following can be noted. First, Mark portrays *Jesus* as empowering or giving the disciples authority to cast out demons (3:14-15; 6:7).

Second, the complaint raised against the man who casts out demons in *Jesus*' name (9:38-40) seems to imply that he is imitating the disciples and, consequently, that they also cast out demons in the name of Jesus or on his authority. In other words, they are dependent on the power of Jesus for their "mighty works."

Third, the story of the demon possessed boy (9:14-29) gives further illustration of the difference between Jesus and the disciples. When Jesus is asked by

⁷ Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 230.

⁸ G. Petzke's conclusion that Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii* does not depend on the Gospels (*Die Traditionen über Apollonius von Tyana und das Neue Testament* [Studia ad corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti 1; Leiden: Brill, 1970]) has not convinced everyone. See e.g., H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 256-65; Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 230 n. 124.

⁹ Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 173. Kahl's terminology and distinctions have been adopted by E. Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles* (JSNTSup 231; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), who in contrast to Kahl applies them to all types of miracles in the Jewish tradition. His study confirms the result of Kahl's with regard to the unique character of Jesus' role in miracles. The only possible exception to the view that God alone is the BNP in the Jewish tradition is found in Artapanus' portrayal of Moses in *On the Jews* (OTP 2:898-903; see Eve's discussion on pp. 232-41).

¹⁰ Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 231. He notes some differences between the canonical Gospels. Luke's redaction of the miracle stories, for example, often appears to make Jesus an MNP. This should be contrasted with Acts where Jesus becomes a transcendent BNP who empowers the apostles.

the disciples why they failed to cast out the demon, Jesus responds that “this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (9:29). Jesus is telling the disciples what they must do, but the careful reader will notice that Jesus did *not* pray, only commanded the unclean spirit by his powerful word: ἐγὼ σοι ἐπιτάσσω (9:25).¹¹ Thus, while the disciples must pray, Jesus apparently does not.¹²

The same conclusion applies to the interpretation of Jesus’ cursing of the figtree (Mark 11:20-25). Jesus states that nothing (even having mountains thrown into the sea) is impossible for the one who has faith (v. 23).¹³ But it is clear from the following word on prayer that it is not the believer who causes miracles, but the one to whom prayers are directed (v. 24). That Jesus can guarantee this (ὁμῆν λέγω ὑμῖν) is a further pointer to his exalted role. Furthermore, successful prayer, in Mark’s view, presupposes that those who pray are themselves forgiven and that they are willing to forgive others (v. 25).¹⁴ Thus, again, while Jesus simply may use his powerful word to accomplish the humanly impossible (i.e. act as a BNP), his followers are directed to prayer (i.e. to act as PNPs).

10.2.3. Jesus’ Healing Miracles and Isa 35:4-6

Unlike Matthew (11:4-6) and Luke (7:22), Mark does not include a *summary* of Jesus’ miracles with a direct allusion to Isa 35:5-6: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.” The Evangelist may nevertheless have understood Jesus’ healing miracles as fulfilling the promise of Isaiah. Mark relates healings of all four illnesses mentioned by the prophet and five of Mark’s eight

¹¹ Cf. France, *Mark*, 368-69.

¹² Gundry, *Mark*, 402-3. For a different interpretation which comes to the same conclusion with regard to Jesus’ power over the demon, see O. Hofius, “Die Allmacht des Sohnes Gottes und das Gebet des Glaubens: Erwägungen zu Thema und Aussage der Wundererzählung Mk 9,14-29,” *ZTK* 101 (2004): 117-137. France, *Mark*, 370, concludes that the disciples’ problem was “a loss of the sense of dependence on Jesus’ unique ἐξουσία which had undergirded their earlier exorcistic success.”

¹³ S. E. Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22-25 in the Context of Markan Theology* (SBLDS 105; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988), 119-20, thinks that Mark interprets Jesus’ curse as a prayer. But, as Marcus notes, it is a matter of analogy rather than identity: “Jesus’ curse is like a prayer in invoking divine power, but unlike it in addressing the affected object rather than God” (*Mark*, 785). Against Dowd’s interpretation is also that Mark nowhere else portrays Jesus as accomplishing a miracle by means of prayer. The same goes for C. D. Marshall’s suggestion that Mark understands Jesus’ faith as the channel for his miraculous power. See *Faith as a Theme in Mark’s Narrative* (SNTSMS 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 238-40. Jesus nowhere speaks of his own believing. See Gundry, *Mark*, 653.

¹⁴ Marcus, *Mark*, 794-95.

healings involve these (2:1-12 [lame]; 3:1-5 [lame]; 7:32-37 [deaf and mute]; 8:22-26 [blind]; 10:46-52¹⁵ [blind]).¹⁶

The combination of two of these in the healing of the man who was deaf and mute (7:32-37) is commonly regarded as a direct allusion to Isa 35:5-6. In response to the miracle, people exclaim: “He has done all things well [καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκε]. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” The first part of this statement appears to echo Gen 1:31: καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεός τὰ πάντα, ὅσα ἐποίησεν, καὶ ἰδοὺ καλὰ λίαν,¹⁷ the latter Isa 35:5-6. A further indication that Isa 35:5-6 is in view is the presence of the word μογιγάλος (7:32) which appears only here in the NT and only in Isa 35:6 in the entire LXX.¹⁸

What is the significance of this, then? In the absence of any evidence that the Messiah or any other eschatological figures were going to accomplish these miracles,¹⁹ it must be taken seriously how the Isaiah text itself introduces these promises: “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He *will come* and save you” (35:4). Mark’s point is then probably that God indeed has come to save!²⁰

10.2.4. Jesus’ Healing of a Leper

Finally, we should note how Mark emphasizes Jesus’ divine authority in the second healing miracle which he relates in some detail, the cleansing of a leper (1:40-45). To heal a leper was considered as difficult as raising a dead person and something God alone could do.²¹ One may, for example, note the king of Israel’s reaction when he receives a request to have Naaman cured from leprosy: “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?” (2 Kgs

¹⁵ On the allusion to Isa 35:5-6 and God’s own coming in 10:46-52, see J. H. Charlesworth, “The Son of David, Solomon, and Jesus,” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (ed. P. Borgen and S. Giversen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 72-87, 85.

¹⁶ The other three are: 1:29-31 (fever); 1:40-45 (leprosy); 5:25-34 (flow of blood). Mark also recounts four exorcisms: 1:23-27; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-27.

¹⁷ Gnika, *Markus*, 1:298; Marcus, *Mark*, 475-76; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 241. Cf. also LXX Eccl 3:11; Sir 39:16. Gnika suggests that it is a matter of a renewal of the fallen creation.

¹⁸ Hurtado, *Mark*, 119.

¹⁹ See the discussion of 4Q521 in chapter 5.

²⁰ Cf. Novatian, *Trinity* 12.

²¹ Exod 4:7; Num 12:13-15; 2 Kgs 5:1-15; Jos. *Ant.* 3.11.3. See further Str-B 4:750-51. For the comparison of leprosy with being dead, see 2 Kgs 5:7; Job 18:13; Str-B 4:745.

5:7). Unlike Moses, who cries to YHWH (Num 12:13), and Elisha, who prescribes certain means for God's healing (1 Kgs 5:10, 15), Jesus heals the man by his own word (1:41).²² Jesus is, however, not only ascribed the divine prerogative to heal leprosy, but also the unique divine ability to do whatever he wills (Mark 10:27).²³ The leper, in fact, does not request to be cured, but confesses, "If you *will*, you can make me clean" (1:40).²⁴ Given the placing of this healing miracle at the outset of the Gospel, it seems likely that the audience will view all Jesus' healing miracles through the lenses of this one and consequently understand all of them as divine acts and evidence of Jesus' close linking to YHWH.

10.3. *Jesus in the Role of God in Parables*

Many of the parables Mark includes in his Gospel use images which are common for God in biblical and early Jewish literature. Since the parables²⁵ however depict Jesus and his ministry,²⁶ it seems plausible that they portray Jesus in the role of God, especially in the light of Mark's general portrayal of Jesus in divine roles.²⁷ Of course, images from daily life in Palestine may not be more than helpful illustrations. Yet, since these images were used in the Jewish scriptures and had a place in the religious vocabulary, it seems likely that they would bring to mind not only the daily life but also their common religious usage,²⁸ and in this usage their connection with God is dominant.²⁹

²² Contra E. K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 66-68, Jesus is not acting like a priest; a priest could only declare whether a leper was cured or not (1:44; cf. Lev 13).

²³ Job 42:2; Pss 115:3; 135:6; Eccl 8:3; Isa 55:11; Wis 11:23; 12:17-18.

²⁴ Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:143; Gundry, *Mark*, 95; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 88-89.

²⁵ In the following a wide definition of the word "parable" is assumed. The first appearance of the word "parable" in 3:23 suggests that Mark uses the category for different literary forms that communicate indirectly. See Boring, *Mark*, 85 n. 32.

²⁶ E.g., J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1972), 230.

²⁷ On the christology of Jesus' parables, see P. B. Payne, "Jesus Implicit Claim to Deity in his Parables," *TJ* 2 (1981): 3-23, who is, however, concerned with the historical Jesus. See also K. E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); idem, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2008), 254.

²⁸ H. Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 80-81.

²⁹ Payne, "Jesus' Implicit Claim," 3.

10.3.1. Bridegroom

The metaphor is used in Mark 2:18-20, where Jesus presents a short parable in the form of a rhetorical question to defend why he and his disciples do not fast: “Can the wedding guests (or groomsmen) fast while the bridegroom is with them?” The point is probably that the presence of Jesus takes precedence even over religious customs, which in itself places Jesus in a class of his own. More importantly for our present concern, however, the parable identifies Jesus *himself* as the bridegroom.³⁰ Some scholars have argued that the passage is not at all making a christological point,³¹ but it seems doubtful in the light of the repeated use of the term “bridegroom” and the clear application of the image to Jesus (2:19). All attention is turned onto the person of Jesus.³² In the light of the lack of any evidence for messianic use of the bridegroom image and its predominant use for God in the Jewish literature,³³ many scholars have suggested an extremely exalted view of Jesus in the present passage. Collins, for example, states that the passage “implies that the presence of Jesus is equivalent to the presence of God.”³⁴ Mark presents Jesus as the bridegroom of the people of God in the new age,³⁵ implicitly attributing to him a role which belongs to the God of Israel alone.

10.3.2. Physician

The saying which precedes the bridegroom pericope, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (2:17), probably also assigns to Jesus a

³⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, 136; Collins, *Mark*, 199.

³¹ Anderson, *Mark*, 107.

³² Collins, *Mark*, 199.

³³ Isa 49:14-26; 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; 3:1-14; 31:32; Ezek 16:8-14, 59-64; 23:4-5; Hos 2:1-3:1. The metaphor is particularly prominent in passages which describe God’s *eschatological* relationship with his restored people. On this metaphor, see W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Baker; London: SCM, 1961), 250-58. Later Judaism also speaks frequently of God as the bridegroom of Israel. The Rabbis seem to have loved the metaphor and interpreted Song of Songs allegorically. J. Jeremias, “νύμφη, νυμφίος,” *TDNT* 4:1099-1106, 1101-03, and J. Gnilya, “‘Bräutigam’ – spätjüdisches Messiasprädikat?” *TTZ* 69 (1960): 298-301, argues that the image was reserved for God and that there is no pre-Christian evidence that it was applied to a messianic figure. This has been challenged by R. Zimmermann, “‘Bräutigam’ als frühjüdisches Messias-Prädikat?: Zur Traditionsgeschichte einer urchristlichen Metaphor,” *BN* 103 (2000): 85-100. Zimmermann cites LXX Ps 44; 1QIsa^a on Isa 61:10; *Tg. Zech.* 3:1-10, but admits that an explicit usage of the bridegroom metaphor cannot be demonstrated.

³⁴ Collins, *Mark*, 199. Similarly Cranfield, *Mark* 110; Gärtner, *Markus*, 93; Riesenfeld, *Gospel Tradition*, 152-54; Payne, “Jesus’ Implicit Claim,” 11-12; Moloney, *Mark*, 66-7.

³⁵ Although it is not explicit in Mark, the community of believers are probably implied to be the bride as elsewhere in the NT.

role which belongs to God. In the OT and the Jewish tradition, God is the true physician and healer:³⁶ “I am YHWH your healer” (Exod 15:26; cf. Exod 23:25; Deut 7:15; 32:39). Sirach, although praising earthly doctors, acknowledges that the Lord is the ultimate source of healing (Sir 38:2). But YHWH is also the true physician in a figurative sense, the one who heals the spiritual sicknesses of his people. The image of a physician is used to describe God’s act of forgiving his people (LXX Deut 30:3; cf. Isa 6:10) or individuals (Pss 6:2; 30:2; 41:4; 103:3). Philo states that God is “the only physician for the sicknesses of the soul” (*Sacrifices* 70). Even though the Greek tradition can apply the proverb Jesus quotes to the activity of philosophers,³⁷ in the Jewish context, the saying seems to apply to Jesus an image normally used for the God of Israel.³⁸

10.3.3. Sower

Three parables in the Markan parable chapter (4:3-8, 26-29, 30-32) depict the activity of a sower. The agricultural image is widely used for God in the Jewish tradition,³⁹ often to describe the saving acts of YHWH in the past or the future. This background would imply that the sower in the parables is God, but the Markan context suggests that it is Jesus.⁴⁰ Like the sower, Jesus is constantly “sowing the word” (cf. 2:2 with 4:14). The verb used to describe the going out of the sower is used of Jesus in several passages (1:35, 38; 2:13). Furthermore, the result of the sowing corresponds to the result of Jesus’ teaching as exemplified throughout Mark (cf. 4:15-20 with 3:23-30; 6:3-6; 10:17-22, 28-30). Given the dominant use of the metaphor for God, Jesus seems again to be implicitly linked to YHWH.⁴¹

³⁶ H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (SNTSMS 55; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12-26.

³⁷ Collins, *Mark*, 195-96.

³⁸ Marcus, *Mark*, 231; Boring *Mark*, 82; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 103.

³⁹ Payne, “Jesus’ Implicit Claim,” 4; Collins, *Mark*, 244, 246. See Isa 61:11; Jer 31:27; Ezek 36:8-9; Hos 2:21-23; LXX Zech 10:9; CD 1:7; 1QS 11:8; 1QH 6:15-17; 8:5-24; *1 En.* 10:16; 62:8; 84:6; *4 Ezra* 4:28-32; 8:41-44; 9:18-22, 30-31.

⁴⁰ J. Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (SBLDS 90; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 37-39. So also Lane, *Mark*, 161; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:234; France, *Mark*, 204; Moloney, *Mark*, 87; Collins, *Mark*, 246.

⁴¹ So e.g., Payne, “Jesus’ Implicit Claim,” 5; Boring, *Mark*, 117; Collins, *Mark*, 246.

10.3.4. Director of the Harvest

In the second of Mark's sowing parables (4:26-29), the farmer is also depicted as the director of the harvest: "But when the fruit is ripe, at once he sends out the sickle, for the harvest has come" (4:29). The somewhat awkward description of the harvest is a virtual citation of Joel 4:13,⁴² a passage which vividly depicts the day of YHWH. In this, as in many other texts which employ harvest as a metaphor for the eschatological judgment,⁴³ the task of initiating and directing the harvest belongs to God. Although there is some disagreement about the identity of the harvest director, the overall Markan context, again, points to Jesus.⁴⁴ The kingdom of God (4:26) is inaugurated by Jesus through the spreading of the word, the equivalent of the sowing in the parable and Jesus has already been identified as the sower in the first parable. Furthermore, at least two other passages in Mark suggest that Jesus will function as the director of the eschatological harvest (8:38; 13:27). In the light of this, it is plausible that Mark intends his readers to understand Jesus as the inaugurator of the harvest in the parable. If this is correct, Jesus takes on another image which is normally applied to God and we have also another example of an OT day of YHWH text which, at least implicitly, is applied to Jesus in Mark.⁴⁵

10.4. *The Lord of the Sabbath*

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath [ὥστε κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου]. (Mark 2:27-28)

The words appear at the end of the controversy story of the plucking of the grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28) and provide a final argument for Jesus' defence of his disciples' behaviour. There is no question that the final verse presents Jesus as lord over the sacred institution of the Sabbath, but there is some disagreement about the significance of the statement. The main reason for this is the conjunction ὥστε which introduces the sentence. Some scholars argue that ὥστε harks back to verse 27 in such a way that the lordship over the Sabbath, now claimed by the Son of Man,

⁴² On the various renderings of Joel 4:13, see R. Stuhlmann, "Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu Markus IV.26-29," *NTS* 19 (1973): 153-62, 161-62.

⁴³ Isa 18:4-5; 41:14-16; 63:1-6; Jer 51:33; Hos 2:21-23. Cf. also *4 Ezra* 4:26-39; *2 Bar.* 70:2; *Rev* 14:15-20.

⁴⁴ See Marcus, *Mystery*, 177-79 for a detailed argumentation.

⁴⁵ For an argument that the image lord is applied to Jesus in the parables in 12:1-9 and 13:33-37, see D. Johansson, "Kyrios in the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 109-11.

is grounded in mankind's general lordship over the Sabbath, which, in turn, assumes that mankind was granted lordship not only over the created order (Gen 1:30-31) but also the Sabbath.⁴⁶ Others, however, think it more likely that it refers to the preceding discussion as a whole and that it provides a decisive argument grounded in the authority of Jesus himself.⁴⁷ It is clearly in the latter meaning Matthew and Luke take the saying, as they do not include 2:27 and the conjunction ὥστε in their accounts.⁴⁸

Two arguments, in particular, suggest that Mark's intention is no different than Matthew and Luke, however. First, it is dubious that anyone would declare humanity in general, even if limited to Israel, lord of the Sabbath when the OT attributes this to no other than YHWH himself.⁴⁹ Lev 23:3 states: "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to YHWH [LXX: σαββατά ἐστιν τῷ κυρίῳ] in all your dwelling places".⁵⁰ Even though the phrase κύριος τοῦ σαββάτου is never used to express God's lordship over the Sabbath, it is clear that the one who had instituted and consecrated the Sabbath (Exod 20:10) also rules over it.

The second reason is intratextual. Many scholars observe that 2:28 corresponds to 2:10, the only previous occurrence of the Son of Man title:⁵¹

ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας (2:10)

κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου (2:28)

Given this parallel, it is also likely that καὶ harks back to the statement in 2:10.⁵² Mark's point is obviously that Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath is related to his

⁴⁶ Cf. Pesch, *Markus*, 1:185-86; Guelich, *Mark*, 125.

⁴⁷ E.g., Lane, *Mark*, 120; Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:124; Ernst, *Markus*, 103; France, *Mark*, 148; J. P. Meier, "Does the Son of Man Saying in Mark 2,28 Come from the Historical Jesus?" in *"Il Verbo di Dio è vivo": Studi sul Nuovo Testamento in onore del cardinale A. Vanhoye, S.I.* (ed. J. E. Aguilar Chiu et al.; Analecta biblica 165; Rome: Pontificio Ist. Biblico, 2007), 71-89, esp. 81-86.

⁴⁸ Matthew (12:8) has γάρ instead of ὥστε, whereas it is absent in Luke (6:5). Both have another word order.

⁴⁹ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1:124; France, *Mark*, 147; Boring, *Mark*, 91; Cf. also Meier, "Mark 2,28," 84.

⁵⁰ Cf. Exod 16:25; 20:10; Deut 5:14: "a Sabbath of/to YHWH"; Exod 31:13; Lev 19:3, 30; Ezek 20:12-13: "my Sabbaths."

⁵¹ Cf. e.g., Gundry, *Mark*, 144. Some view these as editorial comments on the part of the author (e.g., Cranfield, *Mark*, 118; Lane, *Mark*, 120).

⁵² J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1-3:6* (SBLDS 48; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 99-100; H. Sariola, *Markus und das Gesetz: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1990), 80-81.

authority to forgive sins, and since the latter is a divine prerogative (2:7) it seems plausible that Mark intends nothing less in 2:28. Thus, whether κύριος should be understood as a christological title⁵³ or merely in the sense of someone in a position of superior authority, the verse ascribes to Jesus a position and authority which is due to God alone.⁵⁴

10.5. *The Divine Shepherd*

The story of the feeding of the five thousand (6:31-44) is introduced by an implicit description of Jesus as a compassionate shepherd:

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion [ἐσπλαγχνίσθη] on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd [ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα]. And he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

This description is a key to the interpretation of the entire feeding scene, indicating that the following discourse should be read in the light of this.⁵⁵ While Jesus is not explicitly identified as a shepherd, the placing of these words here implies that he is a good shepherd who responds to the people's need by teaching and feeding them.⁵⁶

It is generally agreed that this description has christological implications. But is he a Mosaic shepherd, a Davidic shepherd, or even the Divine shepherd? The answer depends to a large degree on which OT passage(s) Mark 6:34 and its context intend to evoke.

⁵³ Anarthrous κύριος may be due to the fact that the predicative nominative is placed before the copulative verb ἐστίν and the subject. In these cases the definite article is normally omitted before the predicative nominative while it is retained before the subject (Colwell's rule; cf. John 1:1). We should, then, probably translate "the Son of Man is *the* Lord of the Sabbath." Though I do not claim any direct link, it is striking that the same kind of construction appears in Dan 4:17 (Theodotion) with God as subject: ὅτι κύριός ἐστιν ὁ ὑψίστος τῆς βασιλείας τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

⁵⁴ Gnika, *Markus*, 1:124; France, *Mark*, 148; G. Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* (BZNW 123; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 129. Mark may also portray Jesus as lord of another divine institution, the temple. The citation of Isa 56:7 in Mark 11:17 ("my house") could be a claim on the part of Jesus that the temple is his. God's temple is thus in Mark transferred to Jesus or belongs to both God and Jesus. See E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 218; Marcus, *Way*, 123. This interpretation finds support in the application of Mal 3:1 (which also says, "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to *his* temple") to Jesus (Mark 1:2) which Mark seems to see as fulfilled in Jesus' sudden appearance in the temple (11:11; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 258).

⁵⁵ Cf. G. Friedrich, "Die beiden Erzählungen von der Speisung in Mark. 6,31-44; 8,1-9," *TZ* 20 (1964): 10-22, 15: "Dieses einleitende Wort gibt die Richtung an, wie die folgende Geschichte gedeutet werden soll." Similarly Guelich, *Mark*, 340. Cf. also the heading of the entire section 6:30-56 in Pesch, *Markus*, 1:345: "Jesus, der Hirte Israels."

⁵⁶ F. J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 16.

The phrase ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα evokes several passages,⁵⁷ but Ezek 34:5 appears to fit the Markan context best, since Mark shares with Ezekiel that the problem is not lack of leaders but the wrong kind of leaders. Throughout Mark, Jesus is doing good towards people while the leaders of the people are criticizing him and not attempting to do anything themselves (esp. 2:1-3:6). The Markan picture of the leaders of the people (7:1-13; 12:1-9, 38-40) resembles God's critique of the shepherds of Israel in Ezek 34 on many points, and, contrasting them, Jesus is portrayed as acting as the ideal shepherd of Ezek 34, YHWH himself (esp. v. 16). In addition, there are several echoes of Ezek 34 in Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand: the divine shepherd will gather his sheep (34:13); he will make them lie down in good grazing land to eat (34:14-16); he (34:14, 16) and his servant David will shepherd them (34:23); the people shall be safe in the wilderness (34:25); and they will be abundantly fed (34:26-27, 29; cf. Mark 6:35, 39, 42). Mark's feeding narrative seems thus in many ways to be a literal fulfillment of the promises in Ezek 34.⁵⁸

Several scholars have also observed echoes of Psalm 23 (LXX 22) in Mark 6:31-44.⁵⁹ Allison notes the following parallels: the Lord is my shepherd (23:1); they were like sheep without a shepherd (6:34); I shall not want (Ps 23:1); they all ate and were satisfied (6:42); he makes me lie down in the green pastures (23:2); he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass (6:39). The Markan setting at the seashore (6:34-35) may also recollect Ps 23:2: "He leads me beside still waters." Whatever the precise correspondence is, the picture is the same in Mark and Psalm 23: "The shepherd cares for his flock on the green grass by the water, and the sheep have no lack."⁶⁰

Further, given Mark's programmatic citation of Isa 40:3 (Mark 1:3), Isaianic influence on Mark's sheep/shepherd imagery must also be considered. The central motifs in the feeding account (the sheep/shepherd metaphor; Jesus' compassion; the

⁵⁷ Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Zech 10:2; Jdt 11:19.

⁵⁸ Cf. Matera, *Christology*, 16; Lane, *Mark*, 226; Guelich, *Mark*, 340-44. For Mark's use of Ezek 33-34, see also T. J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 210-13.

⁵⁹ E.g., D. C. Allison, "Psalm 23 (22) in Early Christianity," *IBS* 5 (1983): 132-137; Pesch, *Markus* 350-56.

⁶⁰ Allison, "Psalm 23," 134.

feeding) all have their counterparts and are highly developed in Isaiah.⁶¹ Isa 40:11 promises that YHWH at his own coming shall “feed his flock like a shepherd.”

To this we may also add that the dominating aspect of the shepherd imagery when used for God is not that of a ruler, but that of a compassionate and caring shepherd.⁶² The intimate relationship between YHWH and his people can thus be described in terms of shepherding: “For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Ps 95:7).⁶³

Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as a compassionate⁶⁴ shepherd thus appears to overlap with the role of YHWH in Psalm 23 and fulfills the promise of God’s coming as shepherd in Isa 40:11. That Jesus feeds the people by performing a miracle⁶⁵ points in this same direction. This is not to deny that there are other aspects to Mark’s shepherd imagery. The important background in Ezek 34 may suggest that Jesus is fulfilling the role of *both* the shepherd YHWH (the dominating aspect in Ezek 34) *and* the promised “servant David” (Ezek 34:23).⁶⁶

10.6. The One who Destroys and Rebuilds the Temple

Of the many false testimonies against Jesus at the trial (14:56), Mark only includes the charge that Jesus had said, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands” (14:58). This accusation may also point to Jesus’ close linking with God, or, more precisely, to that Jesus’ opponents understand and accuse him for arrogating divine roles to himself.

⁶¹ See R. E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (WUNT 2:88; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1997), 177-79. He argues that the importance of Isaianic imagery for Mark suggests that the feeding account should be read in light of YHWH’s provision for his people in the new Exodus promised in Isaiah.

⁶² On the various shepherd images in the OT, see B. Willmes, *Die sogenannte Hirtenallegorie Ez 34* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), 279-347; R. Hunziker-Rodewald, *Hirt und Herde: Ein Beitrag zum alttestamentlichen Gottesverständnis* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001).

⁶³ See also Pss 23; 79:13; 100:3.

⁶⁴ ἑσπλαγγνίσθη expresses more than ordinary human compassion. See Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 124; Gnika, *Markus*, 1:259; H. Köster, “σπλαγγχνον, κτλ,” *TDNT* 7:553: “it characterises the divine nature of His acts.” In Mark it appears four times, always in connection with extraordinary miracles (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22).

⁶⁵ Jesus does not pray to God for a miracle, but praises God for the food (6:41; cf. 8:6). See Gundry, *Mark*, 325-26.

⁶⁶ On the relationship between the divine and the Davidic shepherd in the Ezek 34, see e.g., Willmes, *Hirtenallegorie*, 458-474; Hunziker-Rodewald, *Hirt*, 67; W. Baxter, “Healing and the ‘Son of David’: Matthew’s Warrant,” *NovT* 48 (2006): 36-50, 44.

The accusation consists of two elements, destruction of the old temple and the building of a new. Both are ascribed to God in the OT and pre-Christian Judaism.⁶⁷ God destroyed the tabernacle in Shilo and promised to destroy the first temple (Jer 7:12-15; 26:4-6, 9) and the group behind *1 Enoch* obviously expected God to act in the same way again (*1 En.* 90:28-29). The passage from Jer 7 may be particularly relevant since Jesus quotes Jer 7:11 in the temple (Mark 11:11, 17). God is, likewise, portrayed as the builder of the temple in the early Jewish literature.⁶⁸ Only in later rabbinic literature is there sometimes an expectation that the Messiah will build a new temple.⁶⁹ Juel, nevertheless, argues that the accusation portrays Jesus as the Messiah, a judgment which is based on the assumption that Jesus is never portrayed as God in Mark.⁷⁰ While I think Juel correctly has demonstrated that Mark intends the temple charge to be understood as true and that there must be a link between this and the blasphemy accusation, he is certainly wrong that the charge is about royal messianism.⁷¹ For Mark, the controversy between Jesus and the scribes is about Jesus' claims to divine power (14:64; 2:7). It is therefore to be expected that the false witnesses fabricate a charge along those lines. That this is the case is supported by the extant Jewish sources in which God is the only one who *both* destroys and (re)builds the temple.⁷² The temple charge is, in other words, probably "tantamount to another charge of blasphemy" (cf. 2:7).⁷³

10.7. Conclusion

This chapter has suggested further evidence of Jesus acting in divine roles. Mark's portrayal of Jesus' healings links him to God in various ways. Like God he appears to be what Kahl defines as a "bearer of numinous power," i.e., Jesus does not pray to God for the miracles, but causes them by his own powerful word. Mark, furthermore,

⁶⁷ See the surveys in D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 169-209; Gundry, *Mark*, 899-900.

⁶⁸ Exod 15:17; *1 En.* 90:28-29; *Jub.* 1:17; 11QTemple 29:8-10; 4QFlor 1:3, 6.

⁶⁹ *Tg. Isa* 53:5; *Tg. Neb.* Zech 6:12; *Lev. Rab.* 9.6; *Num. Rab.* 13.2. See the discussion in Juel, *Messiah*, 182-97.

⁷⁰ Juel, *Messiah*, 208, cf. 99.

⁷¹ So also P. G. Davis, "'Truly this man was the Son of God': The Christological Focus of the Markan Redaction" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1979), 180-84; H. L. Chronis, "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39," *JBL* 101 (1982): 97-114.

⁷² *1 En.* 90:28-29 seems to be the only passage where the two elements are juxtaposed.

⁷³ Davis, "Truly," 184.

appears to see Jesus as fulfilling the promise of God's own coming to heal in Isa 35:4-6 and shows him to have the ability to heal as he wills, even impossible leprosy (1:40-45). Further, several images which are normally used of God are implicitly applied to Jesus in the parables, Jesus is presented as the lord of the Sabbath, he implicitly appears as the divine shepherd in the feeding narrative in Mark 6, and he is finally accused of claiming what seems to be the divine prerogative to destroy and build a new temple. With this varied support for Mark's portrayal of Jesus in divine roles, we finally turn to discuss the principal question of this thesis, namely, how Mark relates Jesus to the one God of Israel.

11. Who is He Then?

11.1. Introduction

We have reached the point when we should attempt answering the question which is implicit throughout Mark, the question which is formulated by the terror-stricken and bewildered disciples after Jesus stilled the wind and the storm-tossed sea: Who, then, is this? I proceed by first looking at two important presuppositions for a correct understanding, namely that Mark maintains the true humanity of Jesus and the Jewish adherence to one God who is distinguished from all other reality as its creator and Lord. I shall then summarize the result of our findings in previous chapters and formulate an answer to the question of this thesis, before making some final observations regarding Mark's christology.

11.2. The Humanity of Jesus

To remove any potential misconceptions about the person of Jesus in Mark, I stress that the humanity of Jesus is not in dispute.¹ Despite the many divine traits in Mark's portrayal of Jesus, Mark is clearly not a representative for an early docetism. No passage testifies better to this fact than the exclamation of the Roman centurion in the moment Jesus *dies*: "Truly this man [οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος]² was the Son of God"³ (15:39). Throughout, Jesus is referred to as Jesus of Nazareth (1:27; 10:47; 16:6; cf. 1:9). He has a human mother as well as brothers and sisters (6:3).⁴ It is apparent that people regard him as a human being, for it is only when Jesus acts in

¹ Cf. Taylor, *Mark*, 121: "The sheer humanity of the Markan portraiture catches the eye of the most careless reader."

² The only other designation of Jesus as ἄνθρωπος is found in the mouth of Peter when he denies Jesus (14:71). It seems plausible that Mark intended his readers to contrast the Centurion's confession with Peter's cowardice.

³ The lack of the definite article in "Son of God" [υἱὸς θεοῦ] may indicate that the centurion saw Jesus as "a son of God." But it is probable that Colwell's rule applies to this case so that a definite article is not required in order to treat the noun as definite (cf. the discussion of 2:28 in 10.4). Mark's audience would probably understand the "confession" in the light of previous occurrences of the title where the definite article is present (1:11; 3:11; 9:7; 14:61). See P. G. Davis, "Mark's Christological Paradox," *JSNT* 35 (1989): 3-18, 11-12. Davis interprets the centurion's confession as the key to Mark's christology and argues that it ascribes both true humanity and "genuine divinity" (12) to Jesus.

⁴ On the potential hint of a miraculous conception here, see L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 319-22. The lack of any reference to a human father of Jesus seems to suggest that, for Mark, God is Jesus' father (8:38; 14:36).

ways which go beyond the humanly possible people ask who he really can be. The same goes for titles, such as teacher, prophet, son of David, which people use for him. He is tempted by Satan (1:13)⁵ and he gets hungry (11:12).⁶ Furthermore, as Davis notes,⁷ there are passages where Mark speaks “less reverently of Jesus than do the other Evangelists”: Jesus is “driven” by the Spirit into the wilderness (1:12); his sanity is doubted (3:21); his ability to perform miracles may sometimes be limited (6:5).⁸ Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane (14:33-41) and at the cross (14:34), no doubt, point to a human emotional life, and, not the least, his *death* cannot mean anything else than that he is a real human being.

An essential part of Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as one like us is also his role as the ideal disciple. Mark seems to have shaped his story so that Jesus is not only the divine Lord and redeemer of the community but also, at the same time, the paradigm to be followed by the audience.⁹ Davis puts it this way:¹⁰

Mark’s whole story can be read as a blueprint for the Christian life: it begins with baptism, proceeds with vigorous pursuit of ministry in the face of temptation and opposition, and culminates in suffering and death oriented towards an as-yet unseen vindication.

This would certainly provide a good explanation for what Mark includes and does not include in his account. Whether or not Mark knew a tradition about Jesus’ miraculous conception and his birth it would simply not fit his aims. The Christian life begins with baptism; therefore Mark’s story about Jesus begins with his baptism. This would, likewise, explain the absence of any resurrection appearances in Mark. The followers of Jesus have not yet seen their vindication by God through the resurrection but live in the faith and hope of one day being raised. In the meantime

⁵ Cf. James 1:13; Heb 4:15.

⁶ Cf. 2:16; 3:20; 14:14. There is no evidence that he only pretends to eat like the angel Raphael in the Book of Tobit (12:19).

⁷ Davis, “Paradox,” 6.

⁸ The last example may, however, have more to do with the unbelief of the Nazarenes than Jesus’ own limitation. For Jesus’ unlimited ability, cf. 1:40.

⁹ See e.g., C. P. Anderson, “The Trial of Jesus as Jewish-Christian Polarization: Blasphemy and Polemic in Mark’s Gospel,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Vol. 1: Paul and the Gospels* (ed. P. Richardson and D. Grauskou; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 107-25, esp. 118-23; P. G. Davis, “Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Changing Horizons* (ed. D.J. Hawkin and T. Robinson; Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 26; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 101-19; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 311-14.

¹⁰ Davis, “Discipleship,” 109.

Jesus' exemplary way of loving God and the neighbour as well as enduring persecution and trials serves as the model to imitate. Whether Mark expected his readers to be able always to imitate their master is another question. His pessimistic depiction of the disciples and Peter, in particular, seems to imply "a lack of illusion in the anthropology of the Evangelist."¹¹ But it was for this reason the Son of Man had come: to serve and give his life as a ransom for the many (10:45; 14:24).

I am less convinced, however, about some other pieces of evidence which are often used to support the humanity of the Markan Jesus. Strong emotions of anger and indignation (1:41; 3:5; 10:14) do not necessarily imply human emotional life,¹² as if God could not show anger.¹³

Also, I find it doubtful that Jesus' ignorance about the date of his return testifies to his humanity: "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, only the Father" (13:32).¹⁴ On the contrary, it seems to ascribe an exalted, *heavenly* identity to Jesus and place him in a *heavenly* hierarchy between the Father and the angels.¹⁵ The statement seems, in fact, to assume an expectation that the Son¹⁶ and the angels knew the exact date of the end.¹⁷ It is probable that Mark includes it to ward off any speculations in this regard.¹⁸ Any claims that angels or the risen Christ have revealed the date, or that Christ had told it to the leading disciples are false, according to Mark. Instead of speculating about the date, the audience should *always* be ready for the return of Christ, as is made clear in

¹¹ M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985), 43-44.

¹² Cf. R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 121-22. This is not to say that Mark did not emphasize Jesus' strong emotions more than Matthew and Luke. See also J. R. Donahue, "Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark," *Int* 32 (1978): 369-86, 379-80.

¹³ Cf. e.g., Deut 1:34; 9:20; 1 Kgs 8:46; 11:9; Ezra 5:12; Ps 78:21; Isa 12:1; Jer 3:5.

¹⁴ Cf. Martin, *Mark*, 124-26.

¹⁵ I agree with Gathercole (*Preexistent Son*, 50) that "heavenly hierarchy" is a better designation of this triad than Davis' "divine hierarchy" ("Paradox," 13; cf. France, *Mark*, 543).

¹⁶ This is Mark's only instance of "the Son," a title which appears frequently in John.

¹⁷ Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 50. G. Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 160, questions the authenticity of this saying on the basis of that God always consults his heavenly court in the Jewish tradition. But cf. Zech 14:7; 4 Ezra 4:51-52; 2 Bar. 21:8, on that knowledge of "the day" may be limited to God.

¹⁸ Pesch, *Markus*, 2:310; Hooker, *Mark*, 323; Boring, *Mark*, 376. On the overall purpose of Mark 13 to tone down speculations about the end in Mark's audience, see e.g., Hooker, *Mark*, 300-02. Boring thinks that charismatic prophets, who claimed revelations from angels and the exalted Christ, are in view in 13:32. This may have some support in the earlier warning against false prophets (13:22). Boring also notes that Mark, unlike Matthew and Luke does not include any revelations from angels, a fact which may indicate that Mark sides with Paul's scepticism in this regard (cf. Gal 1:8).

the following parable.¹⁹ To be sure, the statement means that the Son on this particular point is distinguished from the Father, but it hardly implies that Mark did not think of Jesus as divine.²⁰ In fact, Jesus has just in great detail predicted the future without any reference to God, claimed that he will act in a role reserved for God on the day of YHWH, and, in the preceding verse, put his own words on a par with God's words. Nor do I think that Mark handled his material carelessly here.²¹ Quite the reverse. It seems to have gone unnoticed that this passage is related to the two other passages in which the negation εἰ μὴ is followed by God as the subject (2:7; 10:18: εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ θεός). I have already argued that the contexts of each of these statements place Jesus on the divine side of the reality. This is not the case here, however. The Son's knowledge is on this point distinguished from that of the Father.²² But Mark seems to have been careful to not exclude Jesus from the divine reality of the one God, by including a reference, not to "God" – which he very well could have done –, but to the Father (εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ), the designation he uses for God when the relationship between Jesus and God is in view. Thus, rather than placing a statement of Jesus' humanity (13:32) alongside one on his divinity (13:31),²³ I contend that Mark on this point distinguishes between the two figures who stand on the divine side the God-creation divide.

With these observations on the humanity of Jesus we turn to the question of monotheism in Mark.

¹⁹ J. Winandy, "Le Logion de l'Ignorance (Mc, XIII,32; Mt., XXIV,36)," *RB* 75 (1968): 63-79, argues with reference to passages such as Luke 18:6-8; Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9, 12; 1 Cor 16:22; and Rev 22:20 that the Father has not yet fixed the date and that it therefore is unknown to the Son.

²⁰ Later christological debates should not be read into the statement. On these, see e.g., K. Madigan, "Christus Nesciens? Was Christ Ignorant of the Day of Judgment? Arian and Orthodox Interpretation of Mark 13:32 in the Ancient Latin West," *HTR* 96 (2003):255-78. Madigan notes in passing how Greek philosophy influenced the conflict over this passage (258).

²¹ J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 919, compares the christological implications of Jesus' walking on water with Jesus' ignorance in this passage and concludes that Mark, like many other early Christians, did not have a great concern for consistency or synthesis, or as he also puts it: "In the beginning was the grab bag."

²² G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 461, notes that "it is the part of the Son to leave them [times and seasons] in the Father's hands, for the mark of the Son is to maintain unreserved obedience to the Father" (cf. also Mark 10:40).

²³ Cf. e.g., Boring, *Mark*, 376-77; Marcus, *Mark*, 918.

11.3. Monotheism in Mark

Throughout this study I have referred to Jesus' citation of the *Shema* (12:29) as evidence that Mark maintains the monotheistic belief in one God.²⁴ We need to examine this passage a little closer now. When Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment by a scribe, he begins by citing Deut 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." And the scribe is no less emphatic about God's uniqueness in his response: "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that *he is one*, and *there is no other except him*" (12:32).

This passage is quite exceptional. Even though several passages in the NT allude to the first part of the *Shema*, this is, in fact, the only citation of it!²⁵ Furthermore, it is difficult to find any passages in the biblical and early Jewish literature rivalling this one when it comes to monotheistic density.²⁶ Not only is the *Shema* cited, the scribe's response includes two monotheistic formulas: "he is one"²⁷ and "there is no other except him."²⁸ The monotheistic outlook of Mark's Gospel could not have been stated more forcefully. Mark's reason for including it – which is noteworthy in comparison with the omissions in Matthew and Luke – is probably related to the polytheistic milieu in which his audience lived and the Gentile background of many of its members.²⁹ Thus, whatever the nature of Mark's

²⁴ For a study of God in Mark, see G. Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* (BZNW 123; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004). See also J. Gnllka, "Zum Gottesgedanken in der Jesusüberlieferung," in *Monotheismus und Christologie: Zur Gottesfrage im hellenistischen Judentum und im Urchristentum* (ed. H.-J. Klauck; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1992), 144-62; C. D. Smith, "'This Is My Beloved Son: Listen to Him': Theology and Christology in the Gospel of Mark," *HBT* 24 (2002): 53-86.

²⁵ Deut 6:4 is omitted in the Synoptic parallels. On allusions to the *Shema* in the NT, see R. J. Bauckham, *Jesus*, 94-106. For a recent discussion of Deut 6:4, see E. Waaler, *The Shema and the First Commandment in First Corinthians: An Intertextual Approach to Paul's Rereading of Deuteronomy* (WUNT 2:253; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2008), 98-114, 123-33.

²⁶ Cf. Waaler's conclusion: "In Mark, this is given in a purer form than in many earlier Jewish texts" (*Shema*, 220). Waaler finds three elements in the Scribe's response: 1) confession to God's oneness; 2) denial that there is any other; 3) the statement of no exceptions.

²⁷ Cf. e.g., Zech 14:9; Mal 2:10; *Sib. Or.* 2:126; 3:11; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1:30, 52, 65; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:91; 4:201; 5:97; *Ag. Ap.* 2:193; 2 *Bar.* 48:23-24; 85:14. See also the discussion in Waaler, *Shema*, 106-14, 154-81, 448-49, and U. W. Mauser, "Eis Theos und Monos Theos in biblischer Theologie," in *Einheit und Vielfalt biblischer Theologie* (ed. I. Baldermann, E. Dassmann, O. Hofius; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 71-87.

²⁸ Cf. Exod 20:3; Deut 4:35, 39; 32:39; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Kgs 8:6; Isa 44:6; 45:5-6, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Joel 2:27; Jdt 8:20; Add Esth 4:17; 4Q504 fr. 1-2.V.8-9; *Sib. Or.* 3:624-31; *T. Abr.* 8:7; 2 *En.* 36:1; 47:3. See further the list in Waaler, *Shema*, 450-51.

²⁹ For an explanation of the omission in Matthew, see D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), 247-50. For an argument that it fits in the setting of the Jerusalem temple, see J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol. 4: Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 520-21.

monotheism is, there should be no doubt that the Evangelist repudiates the polytheism of the Greco-Roman world. But I doubt this is the only reason for including this material.³⁰ Mark was also motivated by his view of Jesus. Before I expound this argument, however, we shall observe that the evidence of Mark's monotheism is not limited to chapter 12.

Both Mark 2:7 and 10:18 include, as I noted earlier, the identical phrase εἰ μὴ εἰς ὁ θεός. There are good reasons to think that these allude to the *Shema* and the scribe's response εἰς ἑστίν, since in neither case is the word εἰς necessary. It could easily have been omitted or an adjective such as μόνος could have been used instead (as Luke does in 5:21).³¹ The inclusion of a key-word in the *Shema*, one which was frequently used to stress the uniqueness of Israel's God in these passages, suggests that the monotheistic belief in the one God is the concern in both passages.³²

Central in Jewish expressions of their commitment to monotheism is the belief that God is the sole creator of everything and the sole ruler of all (cf. *3 Macc.* 2:3).³³ Though Mark nowhere elaborates the theme, it comes to expression in 13:19-20, where God first is identified as the creator, and then ascribed the sovereign rule of history, such that he can "shorten the days." Related to this is also the designation of God as "the Most High God" in 5:7.³⁴ In the early Jewish literature, the title typically appears in a Gentile context, either when Gentiles are referring to the God of Israel, or when Jews are addressing Gentiles.³⁵ The Markan example belongs to the former category. Though this designation might imply a worldview in which the God of Israel is the most powerful deity among other deities, Bauckham has recently argued that its use in the early Jewish literature – which he characterizes as "a Jewish literary convention" – rather indicates God's absolute sovereignty over all things,

³⁰ While Matthew may have a predominantly Jewish audience, this is clearly not the case in Luke. Why did Luke not include Deut 6:4 or a similar statement?

³¹ Gnika, "Gottesgedanken," 151; J. Marcus, "Authority to Forgive Sins upon the Earth: The Shema in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 196-211, 197-98. Cf. also Pesch, *Markus*, 1:159; 2:138-39; Waaler, *Shema*, 227-30.

³² Cf. Gnika, "Gottesgedanken," 151: "Die Einzigkeit Gottes steht auf dem Spiel."

³³ Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 36; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 7-11.

³⁴ Cf. Acts 16:17.

³⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus*, 107-26. Bauckham includes a table of all occurrences of the terminology in Jewish writings 250 BCE-150 CE.

history as well as nations, and therefore was especially appropriate in a Gentile context.³⁶

Even if the argument is more implicit, it is also worth pointing out, again, that Mark begins the Gospel by citing Isa 40:3, the beginning of the most explicitly monotheistic portion of the OT. Given Isaiah's general influence on Mark's story, it seems likely that its monotheistic outlook also contributed in shaping Mark's. The Jewish worldview, which is basic to Mark even though it was redefined in light of the Christ event, also implies that fidelity to the biblical/Jewish tradition of the one God is maintained.³⁷

Finally, it should be observed that typical Hellenistic language for "the divine" is conspicuous by its absence in Mark. θεῖος and verbal and adjectival compounds made from θεο- or θεϊο- are nowhere to be found.³⁸ This has led Boring to conclude that Mark is "limiting his explicit God-language ... to the one God of Israel and the Bible, and completely rejecting the typical Hellenistic language for deity and a world of 'divine beings'."³⁹ Apart from the fact that the use of the title "Son of God" for Jesus, at least for the Gentile audience,⁴⁰ could imply that Jesus is a second divine being, Boring's conclusion seems valid.

In the light of this survey, there can be no doubt that Mark stands firmly on Jewish ground over against the religious beliefs of the wider Greco-Roman world with its pantheon of divine beings. In fact, we find some of the strongest expressions of a monotheistic faith in the NT in the exchange between Jesus and the scribe in

³⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus*, 116-22.

³⁷ On the Jewish worldview, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God: Vol. 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 38-44, 215-79; cf. also Marcus, *Mark*, 71.

³⁸ See E. M. Boring, "Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus," *NTS* 45 (1999): 456-59.

³⁹ Boring "God-Language," 456.

⁴⁰ Those more at home with the Jewish tradition cannot possibly have been unaware of its meaning in the Greco-Roman world. On the use of this title on Roman coins and its implication of divinity, see Marcus, *Mark*, 824 with references. The identity of the figure who is designated "son of God" in 4Q246 is debated, but it has been suggested that it refers to Antiochus IV or another figure who infringes on God's power. For a detailed study, see J. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran* (WUNT 2:104; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998), 128-169, who, however, concludes that he is to be identified with the Son of Man in Dan 7. H.-J. Steichele, *Der leidende Sohn Gottes: Eine Untersuchung einiger alttestamentlicher Motive in der Christologie des Markusevangeliums* (Biblische Untersuchungen 14; Regensburg: Pustet, 1980), 141-47, notes a tendency in early Jewish texts to avoid the title, because it could be misunderstood in a physical sense. So also Marcus, *Way*, 77-79.

Mark 12.⁴¹ Mark clearly does not represent a paganization of the Christian faith, where the loyalty to the one God of Israel has been compromised under the influence of Gentile Christians with a less monotheistic commitment than their fellow Jews.⁴² If anything, Mark's inclusion of the *Shema* discussion serves to safeguard against any misunderstandings in that direction. This would also exclude that Jesus is to be understood as a Hellenistic *theios anēr*, more than a human being but less than a god. Whatever the influence may have been on the Jesus traditions Mark utilizes in his Gospel and how those familiar with traditions about "divine men" may have interpreted Mark's portrayal of Jesus, Mark's firm stance on monotheism precludes such an understanding. The same goes for the title "Son of God," which Mark uses for Jesus' unique relationship to God; it must be understood within the framework of a maintained Jewish monotheism.

However, having said this we must also note that the nature of first-century Jewish monotheism is a much debated and controversial issue.⁴³ A range of various opinions can be detected. In the one end of the scale there are those who question that the Jewish religion of the Greco-Roman era in fact was monotheistic.⁴⁴ Instead, it is claimed, an old tradition of two gods (El and YHWH) in Israel surveyed alongside a more monotheistic stance. In her explanation of the worship of Christ, Barker contends that early Christians took over this alleged ditheistic pattern and

⁴¹ This could, of course, be expressed in different ways. For some other examples of a strong monotheistic commitment, see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 48-50.

⁴² This is the classical explanation for the emergence of a divine christology, espoused by W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921) and the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.

⁴³ An helpful overview is found in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 29-53.

⁴⁴ E.g., P. Hayman, "Monotheism – A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *JJS* 42 (1991):1-14; B. Lang, "Der monarchische Monotheismus und die Konstellation zweier Götter im Frühjudentum: Ein neuer Versuch über Menschensohn, Sophia und Christologie," in *Ein Gott allein?: JHVH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (ed. W. Dietrich and M.A. Klopfenstein; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 559-64. From a somewhat different angle, P. Fredriksen, "Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of L. W. Hurtado and A. F. Segal* (ed. D. B. Capes et al.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 25-38, 35-38, argues that "monotheism" is not a very helpful label, since "ancient monotheism means 'one god on top' with other gods ranged beneath, lower than, and in some sense subordinated to the high god" and that both ancient Judaism and early Christianity subscribed to this view. In her view, ancient monotheists, in fact, were polytheists.

identified Christ with YHWH whereas God, the Father of Christ, was understood as El.⁴⁵

In the other extreme of the spectrum are those who contend not only that first century Jews adhered to a firm belief in one God, but that this belief was so strong that any modification or redefinitions of it would have been impossible. This “constraint” excludes the possibility that Jewish Christians attributed divinity to Jesus.⁴⁶ Only Christians (i.e., Gentile Christians) who stood outside the matrix of Judaism and a firm commitment to the one God of Israel would be able to consider Jesus as a divine being. The alternatives are thus stated as either a “broken” monotheism and two deities, or a Jewish monotheism in force and a “non-divine” Jesus. The possibility of a redefined monotheism is excluded beforehand.⁴⁷

In between these extremes we find two positions which agree that the Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman era was monotheistic, but that it also could allow for some complexity and modification. Where these positions differ is as to when and where a complex monotheism can be attested. Rowland and Fossum, for example, maintain that binitarian patterns can be attested already in pre-Christian Judaism,⁴⁸ whereas Hurtado and Bauckham have insisted that the monotheism of pre-Christian was absolute, but that a modification took place in early Christianity.⁴⁹

Space does not permit that I enter into a discussion of the relevant data here. Nor do I think it is necessary, since I am not discussing when and how a “high”

⁴⁵ M. Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's God* (London: SPCK, 1992).

⁴⁶ A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 154-73; M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991). See also 1.1.2.

⁴⁷ Cf. the criticism of this view in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 42-46. Hurtado also criticizes Dunn for a similar view.

⁴⁸ See C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982); J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (WUNT 36; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1985); C. A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU, 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998). This position is criticised in L.W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 85-90.

⁴⁹ L. W. Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3-26; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 29-53; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 1-31; C. J. Davis, *The Name and the Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 129; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). For Hurtado, the decisive argument against a complex monotheism in early Judaism is the absence of any cultic worship of other figures than YHWH. On the monotheism of pre-Christian Judaism, see also P. A. Rainbow, “Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 78-91, esp. 81-83.

christology originated in early Christianity but how *Mark* understands Jesus' relationship to God. The question is in which direction the Markan evidence points. I have already indicated that the citation of Deut 6:4 and other monotheistic formulas in chapter 12 as well as other indications throughout the Gospel demonstrate that Mark maintains a firm monotheistic stance. The view of Barker that early Christians should have taken over an old ditheistic pattern does not get any support from Mark. The kind of distinction between YHWH/Jesus and God/El which Barker presupposes is not present in Mark. This is evident from the fact that biblical texts about YHWH are applied both to Jesus (1:3) and God (12:10-11).⁵⁰ There are, in other words, no reasons to think that the Jewish belief in the one God who ruled the entire universe and who was distinguished from all other reality was not maintained by Mark. But it was, I contend, a monotheism that was modified in order to embrace both God and Jesus. I shall shortly state my reasons for this view.

Whether or not steps already were taken in the direction of a more complex monotheism in some pre-Christian Jewish groups is of less importance here. I think Hurtado and Bauckham are essentially right in their argumentation for an absolute monotheism in first-century Judaism, even though the exalted portrayal of various "divine" agents in some cases point in the direction of more complex views.⁵¹ However, it is worth noting that the few times Mark mentions figures who are sometimes given exalted positions and divine functions in the early Jewish literature, he provides a rather restrained portrayal of these. Moses and Elijah are not ascribed any glory, indeed described at all, when they appear in the transfiguration narrative. Likewise, the descriptions of the angels are reserved and they are throughout subordinated to Jesus and serving him. We may also note the lack of any references to archangels. This pattern could, of course, result from the nature of Mark's writing and his focus on Jesus, where everything else could have been toned down for the purpose of exalting the main character of the story. But not even in his portrayal of Jesus has Mark stressed features that are typically transferred to God's agents in the early Jewish literature. Instead, as we have seen above, Jesus is usually ascribed unique divine prerogatives which are not ascribed to other agents.

⁵⁰ Cf. the criticism of Barker's position in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 32-34; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 94-95; 112-14.

⁵¹ Cf. the survey in Hurtado, *One God*, 41-92. Bauckham, *Jesus*, 171, admits that the portrayal of the Chosen One in the *Parables of Enoch* is "the exception that proves the rule."

Before we draw our conclusions about the nature of Mark's monotheism and further develop the reasons for Mark's strong emphasis of the unity of God, we must, however, summarize our findings in chapters 2-10.

11.4. *Jesus' Divine Identity*

A surprising number of passages portray Jesus in various roles and capacities which primarily were associated with the God of Israel in the Jewish tradition, but also with various gods and divine beings in the Greco-Roman world. Already in the opening sentence is an OT text with YHWH as its subject cited with reference to Jesus and there is an allusion to yet another one (Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1 [chapter 2]).⁵² Given the importance that was attached to the first sentence and the prologue in Antiquity, Mark's placing of these texts at the very outset of the Gospel has significant ramifications for the identity of Jesus and how the rest of the story should be read: the promise of God's own coming is now to be fulfilled through Jesus and Jesus is in some mysterious way the presence of YHWH himself. The rest of Mark's story confirms this. John the Baptist presents Jesus as the stronger one who will baptize with the Spirit. Jesus takes on a unique divine prerogative when he forgives the paralytic's sins (chapter 3). God's willingness to forgive his people had throughout the OT demonstrated the gracious nature of their God and his incomparability with other gods. When Jesus stilled wind and sea he did what only divine beings were expected to do in the Hellenistic world (chapter 4). For the Jews, this power of God proved that he was the only true God. The story of Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus, which unlike similar stories about Elijah, Elisha, or Peter (Acts) is attributed to Jesus' own creative word, shows Jesus to have the divine power over life and death of the creator of everything (chapter 5). This power was, as we saw, also alluded to in other healing stories. Ability to walk on water was reserved for divine beings in the Greco-Roman world and a capacity which rulers who saw themselves as divine used to claim (chapter 6). In the Jewish literature, this feature, again, demonstrates God's sovereignty above all other gods and his true divinity. We also noted that human claims to this power could be seen as blasphemous. The metamorphosis of Jesus in the transfiguration narrative reminds of the transformation

⁵² Incidentally, one may note that Cullman's general observation about the NT, cited at the very beginning of this study, that divine functions and attributes were ascribed to Jesus as a consequence of the transfer of the divine name to him pertains to Mark in a special way: Mark begins by citing an OT YHWH text with reference to Jesus before ascribing various divine prerogatives to Jesus.

of gods familiar from Greco-Roman traditions (chapter 7). But the scene also seems to repeat Moses' and Elijah's encounters with God on Sinai with the significant difference that there are now two divine manifestations and that what was said of God alone there has now been split between Jesus and God. Also Jesus' eschatological roles are those of God (chapter 8). The OT "coming of God" and "day of YHWH" traditions have been transferred to Jesus, who comes in the divine glory accompanied by the angels to save and judge. Further evidence of Jesus in divine roles was found in the healing miracles which present Jesus as a "bearer of numinous power" and fulfilling the promise of God's own coming to heal in Isa 35:4-6 (chapter 10). We also noted the implicit application of images used of God to Jesus in the parables, the claim that Jesus has authority over of the Sabbath, and the implicit presentation of Jesus as YHWH shepherd.

Mark's presentation of Jesus is, however, not limited to his acting in divine roles. People's relation to his very person is analogous to people's relation to God in the Jewish tradition (chapter 9): Jesus expects his followers to suffer and even die for his sake; the relationship to him is the criterion in the judgment; loyalty to him is more important than all other relationships to family and property and necessary to be saved; his followers are acting in *his* name. In short, the command of the *Shema* to love God with all one's capacities is expected to be fulfilled by showing utter devotion to Jesus.

Furthermore, Jesus proclaims his identity with the divine self-declaration ἐγὼ εἰμι in 6:50 (chapter 6). I have found it likely that the ἐγὼ εἰμι sayings in 13:6 and 14:62 should be read the same way. The point of 13:6, where the saying is used by deceivers, is that Jesus alone may use the declaration which God uses to demonstrate his divinity in the OT, particularly in Isaiah (chapter 9). I also remind readers of the likelihood that Jesus shares the very glory of God (8:38; chapter 8) as well as the divine name. The latter is evident in 1:3, but may also be hinted when Jesus comes "in the name of YHWH" (11:9)⁵³ and when people act in his name (9:37), or suffer for his name's sake (13:13).

I also, finally, draw attention to the different reactions to Jesus. On the one hand, Mark often records that people's reaction to Jesus' mighty acts is one of astonishment (1:27; 2:12; etc.). Even more significant in this regard is the

⁵³ For this interpretation of 11:9, see D. Johansson, "Kyrios in the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 113-15.

“theophany fear” of the disciples on a number of occasions when Jesus is acting in ways which surpasses the humanly possible (4:41; 6:50; 9:6). On the other hand, we have the reaction and objection by Jesus’ opponents when he forgives sins and at the trial (2:7; 14:64). For them, Jesus’ claims are viewed as blasphemous precisely for the reason that they are divine prerogatives and that Jesus is threatening God’s unique position.⁵⁴

This gives us an impressive list of passages where Mark’s portrait of Jesus overlaps with the presentation of YHWH, the God of Israel in the OT and early Jewish literature and to some extent the divine beings in the Greco-Roman tradition. What are we to make of this?

To begin with, it should be stressed that there is no doubt about that early Jewish texts sometimes attribute divine roles to various exalted figures, usually an eschatological role where the agent is either sitting on a heavenly throne and taking part in the final judgment, or carrying out God’s judgment by destroying the enemies of God.⁵⁵ The application of divine roles to Jesus in Mark and other early Christian writings is thus not as such a unique phenomenon. But does this mean that Jesus was viewed on a par with these figures? Is the transfer of various divine functions simply evidence for Jesus’ messiahship? Collins, for example, after having concluded that the sea-walking account portrays Jesus as a divine being, since God alone walks on water in the Hebrew Bible, nevertheless in the final analysis appeals to the fact that the Messiah in some Jewish circles was expected to “assume some of the functions normally reserved to God.”⁵⁶ But is this a sufficient explanation? If the evidence was restricted to a few divine functions, or to those that are typically attributed to a messianic agent in the Jewish literature, Collins would probably be right. But this does not appear to be the case. In fact, even when the role of Jesus in the eschatological drama is in view, the Evangelist’s portrayal of Jesus is unique and

⁵⁴ In response to Dunn’s and Casey’s objection that it is only in John we find evidence of Jewish reactions against a christology which was viewed as blasphemous and violating the unique status of Israel’s God. See 3.4.3, n.121.

⁵⁵ See chapter 8, n. 80. The attribution of participation in the final judgment to human beings is a rather widespread phenomenon in the early Jewish literature and one which is not limited to Christ in the early Christian literature (cf. Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:2).

⁵⁶ Collins, *Mark*, 333. In another context she suggests that a “functional divinity” is ascribed to the “one like a son of man” in Dan 7:13-14, the Chosen One in the *Parables of Enoch*, and Jesus in some Synoptic passages. See A. Yarbro Collins, “How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God: A Response,” in Capes et al., *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children*, 55-66, 57. Cf. also e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making: vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 221-22.

surpasses what is said of other Jewish eschatological agents in this regard.⁵⁷ As I noted, the description of Jesus' future coming has its only real parallel in what is said of God himself and seems to derive from the direct application of texts about God.

The Markan evidence can be summarized in the following five points:

1) There is a much *broader attribution of divine prerogatives* to the Markan Jesus: the number of divine roles, capacities, and attributes which are ascribed to him is unparalleled in early Jewish texts.⁵⁸ The cumulative effect of these, I contend, can only imply that the Markan Jesus is divine. The fact that many of these traits connote divinity both in a Jewish and a Greco-Roman context only enforces the point.

2) The large majority of these divine features are *uniquely* ascribed to Jesus, that is, they are not applied to any other agents of God, whether human or angelic, but are divine prerogatives which God does not share with anyone else (e.g., to bestow the Spirit, forgive sins, still sea-storms, walk on water, share God's own glory, raise the dead, heal leprosy, etc.). To these unique features belong also the use of an OT text which includes YHWH as the subject for Jesus, as well as the application of day of YHWH texts and the "coming of God" tradition to Jesus. That they are uniquely applied to Jesus means also that it must be a matter of a direct application of divine prerogatives to Jesus rather than being the application of features which already had been transferred to various exalted figures in early Judaism.

3) Several of the divine roles in which Jesus acts are used in the OT to demonstrate Israel's God's superiority over all other gods, or his true divinity in comparison with all other reality (e.g., forgiving sins, power over wind and sea, walking on water). It is probable that Mark wishes to make the same point by including these stories, that is, to *demonstrate* Jesus' divine identity.

⁵⁷ See 8.4.

⁵⁸ On these parallels, see Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 78-96, who singles out the Chosen One in the *Parables of Enoch* and Wisdom as particularly important antecedents to early Christian views of Jesus (92). However, not even the exalted portrayal of the Chosen One can match Mark's portrayal of Jesus in terms of number and variety. The Chosen One's role is primarily eschatological: he participates in the judgment, shares the divine throne where he is seated as judge, receives worship from the wicked, and salvation is partly dependant on the relation to him (see the discussion in 8.4 and 9.3). Whether this figure is divine or not is a matter of dispute. Bauckham, for example, argues that the Chosen One is included in the divine identity (see Bauckham, *Jesus*, 169-72). As for Wisdom, the other figure Casey points out, it is quite clear that this is intrinsic to God's own identity and not a figure separate from God (see e.g., Davis, *Name*, 160; Bauckham, *Jesus*, 165-66).

4) The Markan evidence involves the very *person of Jesus* and his identity, and is not limited to divine activities which he exercises. The divine name is applied to Jesus, he reveals himself to the disciples using the divine self-declaration ἐγὼ εἰμι, he shares the divine glory, and his followers act in his name.⁵⁹ Furthermore, they are expected to fulfill the *Shema* by showing devotion to Jesus even unto death.

5) Finally, we may note that Mark explicitly or implicitly identifies Jesus' coming with promises of God's own coming in the OT. He does so explicitly at the outset of the Gospel when the promises of God's own coming in Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 are cited with reference to Jesus. It is implied when Jesus fulfills the promise of eschatological healings in Isa 35:4-6 something which is connected with God's own coming to save. It is also implicit in Mark's eschatological teaching about Jesus' future coming where "coming of God" traditions are applied to Jesus. This kind of evidence strongly suggests that Jesus in a mysterious way is the presence of God among his people.

In the light of these observations, I find it unlikely that Jesus is merely exercising some divine functions.⁶⁰ The overall impression of Mark's portrayal of

⁵⁹ These features clearly go beyond what is often labelled "divine functions." For Bauckham, God's name refers to "the unique divine identity" (*Jesus*, 265). Hurtado, on the other hand, notes that the notion that Jesus has been given or shares the divine name is "probably the closest we get to the equivalent of an 'ontological' link of Jesus with God" (*Lord Jesus Christ*, 641).

⁶⁰ Collins, "How on Earth," 57, stresses that Second Temple texts and early Christian literature speak of or imply two kinds of divinity, one functional and one ontological, the latter exemplified by Phil 2:6. However, I am not sure if this distinction really does justice to the evidence. As C. H. Dodd observes, the Hebrew and Greek conceptions of knowledge differed. The Greek knew God by contemplating "the ultimate reality, τὸ ὄντως ὄν, in its changeless essence," whereas for the Hebrew, "to know God is to acknowledge Him in His works and to respond to His claims" (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968], 152). The Bible is concerned not so much with the question of *what* God is, but *who* he is and *what* he *does*. One may perhaps say that God is known through the functions he exercises. God is celebrated for his creation of all things, for bringing Israel out of Egypt, for giving the Law, forgiving sins, etc. This is also evident in the "monotheistic rhetoric" in early Judaism, which according to Hurtado, typically includes the notion of 1) God's universal sovereignty as creator and ruler over all, even over the evil forces that oppose God; and 2) God's uniqueness, expressed by contrasting God with the other deities of the religious environment, but also expressed in contrasts or distinctions between God and God's own heavenly retinue, the angels (*Lord Jesus Christ*, 36). God is thus not primarily distinguished from the creation with reference to metaphysical attributes or statements about God's nature or divine essence. Bauckham, who recently has brought out the difference between Jewish and Greek thinking in this regard, has therefore suggested that it is better to speak of a *divine identity* (*Jesus*, 6-7, 30-31). Instead of clinging to the old categories of function and ontology, we should ask what characterizes God's unique identity, what sets God apart from all other reality. When these uniquely divine characteristics are applied to Jesus, it means, according to Bauckham, that Jesus is *included* in the unique identity of God or that he is intrinsic to the divine identity of God. We are still waiting for Bauckham's projected two-volume work where he is going to further develop his views on "divine identity christology." Many observations made in this study, however, seem to support Bauckham's thesis. Jesus often shares precisely those characteristics of God which set him apart from all other reality.

Jesus is that he also has divine status.⁶¹ This would seem to be evident to both Jewish and Greco-Roman members of Mark's audience. Indeed, one may perhaps say that he *must* be divine in some real sense, for to make the kind of claims for an ordinary *human being* that is made for Jesus in Mark is – to state it bluntly – offensive and blasphemous.⁶² Mark does not seem to disagree with the opponents of Jesus in this regard (2:7; 14:64).

Jesus is, however, not placed in a general category of divine beings. Mark's strong assertion of Jewish monotheism precludes this option. This is, I contend, Mark's christological motivation for including Deut 6:4 and stressing Jewish monotheism. Jesus must not be misunderstood as a second deity alongside the God of Israel or as a son of a god in the sense of the wider Hellenistic world which, no doubt, most members of Mark's audience were familiar with. The confession of God's oneness serves to ward off any errors on the part of the Gentile audience which might be caused by their pagan background. But it was no less important to stress the faithfulness to the confession of one God in the Jewish context.⁶³ The exalted view of Jesus which is put forward in the Gospel is, for Mark, not incompatible with monotheism; Jesus is not competing with God or being a threat to God's supreme position and sovereignty. To be sure, there were those who thought that this was the case, and accused believers in Jesus for being unfaithful to the one creator and Lord – the blasphemy accusations against Jesus and the persecutions against his followers for his sake indicate this – but Mark is at pains to show that he and his fellow believers have not compromised monotheism. A firm monotheistic belief is maintained, but *not* so that Jesus is excluded from the divine reality. Instead, its meaning is *reinterpreted* so that Jesus is included “within the pattern of Jewish monotheism.”⁶⁴ This is brought out in a particular way in 2:7 and 10:18 where the

⁶¹ Collins, who regards Mark as the Synoptic Gospel which puts least emphasis on Christ's divinity (“How on Earth,” 64), can nevertheless at times speak of Jesus as a divine being and God's presence (Mark, 199, 260).

⁶² Cf. what is said about Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9 and Philo's critique of Gaius Caligula's claims to divinity in *Embassy* 118: “God would sooner change into a man than man into god.” According to Philo, it would be blasphemous even to entertain the idea (*Names* 181-82).

⁶³ Cf. Gnllka, “Gottesgedanken,” 152, who also points out that Mark's emphasis of Jewish monotheism is aimed at both Jews and Gentiles.

⁶⁴ I borrow this phrase from Waaler, *Shema*, 443. Davis suggests that early Christians reinterpreted first-century Jewish monotheism as a plurality within the basic unity of God (*Name*, 167-71). Cf. also Gnllka, “Gottesgedanken,” 152: “Wir stehen an den Anfängen eines christologisch-theologischen Reflexionsprozesses”, and further that Jesus “bestimmt ... das Gottesbild des Evangeliums auf unverwechselbare Weise. In einem bestimmten Sinn wird man sogar sagen können – und das bereitet johanneisches Gedankengut vor –, dass für Markus Jesus der Offenbarer Gottes ist” (154). Note also

monotheistic faith of Israel is stressed while Jesus, at the same time, is included on the divine side. God's unity and oneness is, according to Mark, not threatened by Jesus, but on the contrary upheld, since Jesus in a mysterious way is the presence of God on earth, fulfilling the promises of an eschatological coming of God himself (Isa 35:4; 40:3; 60:1-2; Mal 3:1).⁶⁵ Monotheistic confession without christological confession is, in other words, incomplete.⁶⁶ One can therefore with justice speak of *christological monotheism* in Mark.⁶⁷

In the end, then, it must be said that Mark's christology is a paradox.⁶⁸ Mark maintains both that Jesus is a fully human being *and* that he belongs to the mystery which separates God from all other reality. You cannot have both,⁶⁹ but Mark rejects the either/or and affirms both. Jesus is God's visible presence on earth and a human agent. For Mark, there is fundamental unity between Jesus and God as well as clear distinction: Jesus is united with God on the divine side of the God-creator divide, but also distinct from God and relates to God as a son to a father.⁷⁰

the conclusion by Smith, "This Is My Beloved Son," 86: "The significance and identity of Jesus in Mark is an aspect of the narrative presentation of God."

⁶⁵ On the Jewish expectation of a visible coming of God himself, see Davis, *Name*, 159.

⁶⁶ This is illustrated by the scribe who asks Jesus about the greatest commandment (12:28-34). Despite a correct monotheistic confession he is still outside the kingdom of God (12:34). Cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:497.

⁶⁷ For this terminology, see Bauckham, *Jesus*, 18-59. Smith, "This Is My Beloved Son," 86, speaks of a "christological theology" and a "theological Christology" in Mark.

⁶⁸ So rightly Davis, "Paradox." I disagree, however, with his view that Jesus is an intrinsic part of a divine hierarchy consisting of God and the angels (p. 13) and his suggestion that we should speak of Jesus' divinity in Mark in a "broad sense of heavenly nature with status above all but God the Father" (see idem, "'Truly this man was the Son of God': The Christological Focus of the Markan Redaction" [PhD diss., McMaster University, 1979], 155). This would seem to compromise Jewish monotheism. Mark's firm stance on Jewish monotheism implies that Jesus is either on God's side or not divine. The Gospel of Mark is in this regard, I suggest, similar to the Book of Revelation where a strong prohibition against worshipping anyone but God (19:10; 22:8-9) is combined with worship of Jesus as the Lamb (5:6-14). On this, see R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 118-49.

⁶⁹ Cf. Boring, *Mark*, 258: "A truly human Jesus cannot also be truly divine. A truly divine Christ cannot also be truly human." Cf. the distinction in LXX Hos 11:9.

⁷⁰ C. K. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (BZNW 139; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 27, uses the word "Verbindungsidentität" to characterize this kind of relationship between God and Jesus. He defines it as "a shared, narratively established identity in which there is a unity without confusion as well as distinction without separation."

11.5. Concluding Reflections

Unlike the Gospel of John, in which the logos concept⁷¹ and incarnational language are utilized to elucidate the coherence of Jesus' humanity, divinity, and a maintained monotheism, Mark does not make any attempts in that direction. There is, for example, no evidence that Mark thought of Jesus as divine Wisdom.⁷² Personified Wisdom does not forgive sins, still sea storms, or walk on water, to mention just a few examples of things that distinguish the Markan Jesus from Wisdom. More plausible is it, then, that Mark associated Jesus with the Angel of YHWH.⁷³ The glorious appearance of Jesus in the transfiguration narrative might well suggest that Jesus is presented as the Angel of YHWH. This angel had, for example, also authority to forgive and retain sins (Exod 23:21). Moreover, God's angel is at times indistinguishable from God himself (e.g., Exod 3:3-7) and at other times distinguishable (Exod 23:20-21),⁷⁴ a pattern which is similar to Jesus' relationship with God in Mark. But whether or not Mark saw an analogy between the two, it is clear that he did not make any explicit use of it.⁷⁵ Instead, Mark appears to link Jesus

⁷¹ For a convenient survey of the possible backgrounds of this concept, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 519-24.

⁷² For the past half century it has been common to explain "high" NT christologies in terms of personified Wisdom (Prov 8:22-31; Sir 14:3-22; Wis 7:21-10:21). Paul is thought to have equated the preexistent Son with preexistent and personified Wisdom (M. Hengel, "The Son of God," in idem, *The Cross of the Son of God* [SCM: London, 1986], 1-90, 64-74) and the concept is often assumed to stand behind the Johannine logos christology (J. D. G. Dunn, "Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time," in *The Gospel and the Gospels* [ed. P. Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 293-322, 314-16). For a survey and a critique of its presence in Paul's christological thinking, see G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 595-619.

⁷³ This has been argued by G. H. Juncker, "Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament Christology" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001).

⁷⁴ S. Meier, "Angel of Yahweh," *DDD* 96-108; Davis, *Name*, 29-38; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 51-69.

⁷⁵ Some scholars contend that early Christians took up an OT concept in which YHWH is conceived as a corporate person with plural manifestations and, against this background, considered Jesus as a manifestation of Israel's God. See e.g., E. E. Ellis, "Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. M. J. Mulder; Compendia rerum iudicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2:1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 691-725, 716-20; D. B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology* (WUNT 2:47; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 173-74, following A. R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), who, for example, points to the concept of the Spirit, the Word, the Name, the Angel of YHWH, and the ambiguity involved in the plural אֱלֹהִים. Whether or not this conception of God helped early Christians to apply divine prerogatives and texts about God to Jesus (so Capes), it seems clear that many OT manifestations of God were understood as appearances of the pre-incarnate Son in early Christianity. Justin is explicit about this (*Dialogue* 61.1), but it is implicit already in passages such as 1 Cor 8:6; 10:4; John 12:41; Jude 5 (on the latter, see Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 35-41).

directly to God and his divine activities, while at the same time utilizing the familial model of father and son to describe their relationship.

Mark also does not provide any *explicit* statements on the personal preexistence of Jesus. But – and this is significant – there is clearly no denial of it.⁷⁶ Jesus is, as we noted in chapter 2, already identified as the *Kyrios* of Isa 40:3 when he comes to Jordan to be baptized and Mark never reveals when and how Jesus becomes *Kyrios*. He always *is* in Mark's narrative. Moreover, Gathercole has made a good case that the "I have come sayings" of Jesus are indications of a preexistence christology (Mark 1:24, 38; 2:17; 10:45)⁷⁷ and there are other passages which also seem to presuppose this idea.⁷⁸ But Mark did not elaborate this theme, just as he did not describe Jesus' postresurrectional appearances.⁷⁹ I have suggested that Mark had a good reason for these two striking features. It did not fit his aim to also portray Jesus as a model for discipleship.

The lack of explicit statements on preexistence does not mean, however, that Mark's view of Jesus in its essentials is different from John's. When we, as we have done here, ask the basic question how a writing relates Christ to Israel's God we find that Mark's christology is consonant with John's; both believe in and articulate Jesus' unique and intimate association with YHWH. I do not question that there are differences and that John often is more explicit about the divinity of Jesus.⁸⁰ What distinguishes John from Mark, however, is *not* a fundamentally different view on the question of the divinity of Jesus and his relationship to God. Both articulate the paradoxes about Jesus which subsequent generations of Christians had to struggle with and which several hundred years later resulted in the ecumenical creeds.⁸¹

A significant result of this study is, then, that the christology of the Gospel of Mark, contrary to the opinion voiced by many scholars, should be situated among the

⁷⁶ Davis, "Paradox," 12-13.

⁷⁷ Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, passim.

⁷⁸ See L. Schenke, "Gibt es im Markusevangelium eine Präexistenzchristologie?" ZNW 91 (2000): 45-71. Cf. also Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 323.

⁷⁹ But there is no question that he knows of them. See 14:28; 16:7.

⁸⁰ It should, however, not be forgotten that John also has more explicit subordination language. This aspect of Johannine christology is left out of the picture by Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 23-40, 156-59.

⁸¹ On the struggle in early Christianity to develop conceptual categories which hold together Jesus' full humanity, true divinity, and the belief in one God, see e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (5th ed.; London: Black, 1977), 83-162; see also Hurtado's discussion of Justin Martyr (*Lord Jesus Christ*, 640-48).

“high” christologies of John, Paul, the author of Hebrews, and John of Revelation,⁸² who, all in their own distinctive and characteristic ways, articulate Jesus’ unique and close association with the one God of Israel. This study also, to some extent, contributes to the view of the “new *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*” that a high christology was in place very early.⁸³ Given the common dating of Mark around 70 C.E. and the probability of that a high christology was articulated in the Pauline epistles many years earlier, the *text* of Mark does not add anything in terms of chronology, but it provides further evidence that the divine understanding of Jesus was widespread in early Christianity, and, consequently, indirectly supports the idea of an early high christology. Furthermore, also consonant with the views of the “new *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*,” Mark’s exalted view of Jesus is communicated within an OT/Jewish framework of a maintained Jewish monotheism, and with the language of the OT and Jewish concepts and categories. Those features of Mark’s presentation of Jesus which overlap with Greco-Roman traditions usually also overlap with Jewish traditions about Israel’s God. Thus, contrary to the view of the “old *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*,” Mark does not represent a christology where the belief in the one God of Israel is compromised by pagan influences, but one in which Jesus is included in the one divine reality.

In closing, we consider some possible areas of further research prompted by this study. First, given the overall similarities between the Synoptic Gospels it would probably be worthwhile to undertake similar studies of Matthew and Luke. In a recent study, Rowe argues that Luke’s use of the *Kyrios* title places his christology alongside John’s and Paul’s.⁸⁴ An exploration of how Luke’s overall presentation of Jesus overlaps with the presentation of God in the OT and early Jewish literature would probably confirm, but also substantiate Rowe’s conclusions. Second, a comparison of Markan christology and that of John with a particular focus on how Jesus acts in divine roles in the two Gospels could also be considered in order to explore both differences and particular emphases in their respective understandings of Jesus’ divine identity. Third, it might be that some of the evidence discussed in

⁸² On these see e.g., Capes, *Yahweh Texts* (Paul), Bauckham, *Jesus*, 233-53 (Hebrews); idem, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). According to J. D. G. Dunn, “Christology as an Aspect of Theology,” in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of L. E. Keck* (ed. A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 202-12, only John, Paul and the Revelation of John articulate a “high” christology.

⁸³ See 1.2.2 above.

⁸⁴ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 219-31.

this study have relevance and implications for the study of the historical Jesus. Finally, it may also be of interest for the understanding of how the early Church understood Jesus' divinity to analyze to what extent and under which circumstances the church fathers appeal to the kind of evidence discussed in this study to support the deity of Christ.

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